NATION

**Mumbai slum demolition turns violent, 10 cops injured**

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BUSINESS

**Meta gives WFH, then fires 8,000 via 4am mail**

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SPORTS

**GT eye top-two finish with win against flagging CSK**

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# SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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## K'taka sees mixed response over e-pharmacies strike

**BENGALURU, 20 MAY**

A nationwide strike call by the All-India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD) against e-pharmacies saw a mixed response across Karnataka on Wednesday, with several medical shops remaining shut in many districts while others continued normal operations. In Bengaluru, the impact was uneven. While many pharmacies downed shutters in support of the protest, several outlets in areas such as Halasuru remained open and served customers as usual. However, the shutdown saw stronger participation in districts including Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Gadag, Tumakuru, Bagalkot and Shivamogga, where a significant number of medical stores remained closed through the day. In Mysuru, some chemists also operated while wearing black bands as a mark of protest. *—PTI*

*>>>MORE ON PAGE 2*

## US Secretary of State Rubio to visit India on 23 May

**WASHINGTON, 19 MAY**

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will undertake his first visit to India to discuss energy, security, trade, and defence cooperation in meetings with senior Indian officials, said the US Department of State. "Secretary Rubio will travel to India from 23 May to 26 May, where he will visit Kolkata, Agra, Jaipur, and New Delhi," Department spokesman Tommy Pigott said. The US embassy in New Delhi added that Rubio will also attend a meeting of the foreign ministers of the "Quad" group, which includes India, Australia, Japan and the United States. It is to be hosted by India in New Delhi on 26 May, with Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar presiding. *—PTI*

## Taiwan's Yáng wins Int'l Booker Prize

Yáng Shu ng-zi, author of this year's International Booker Prize-winning novel 'Taiwan Travelogue' *—x*

**LONDON, 20 MAY**

Taiwanese author Yáng Shuang-zi and translator Lin King won the International Booker Prize on Tuesday for 'Taiwan Travelogue', a historical romance set in Japan-occupied Taiwan in the 1930s. It is the first novel written in Mandarin Chinese to win the prestigious prize for fiction translated into English. The novel purports to be a travel memoir by a Japanese novelist on a culinary tour of Taiwan and charts the — fictional — writer's complex relationship with her local interpreter. Published in its original language in 2020, 'Taiwan Travelogue' is the first of Yáng's books to be translated into English. In the US, it won the National Book Award's translation category in 2024. *—PTI*

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# SC extends B'luru civic body polls deadline to 31 Aug

## Govt seeks more time amid manpower shortage due to census, SIR

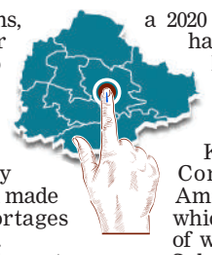
**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

Supreme Court on Wednesday extended till 31 August the deadline for conducting the long-pending elections to the Bengaluru civic body, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) now know as Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), while making clear that no further extension would be granted.

BBMP's elected council's tenure ended on 10 September, 2020, after which the civic body has been under the administration of government-appointed officials handling day-to-day affairs.

Earlier, on 12 January, the apex court had directed the Karnataka government and the State Election Commission to complete the polls by 30 June. However, on Wednesday, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi granted additional time after submissions from the state.

Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the government, sought an extension of two to three months, citing manpower constraints due to the ongoing Census work and SIR of electoral rolls. He also informed the court that budgetary allocations had been made but staff shortages remained a concern.



While granting the extension, the bench observed, "You go and activate your machinery."

The court is monitoring compliance with earlier directions relating to BBMP polls and elections to newly created municipal corporations under GBA.

The matter stems from a plea by the government challenging a 2020 High Court order that had directed expeditious BBMP polls after finalising electoral rolls. High Court had upheld the validity of the Karnataka Municipal Corporation Third Amendment Act, 2020, which increased the number of wards.

Subsequently, the Supreme Court stayed the High Court order in December 2020 and later directed completion of delimitation and notification of wards. The state has now notified reservations for 369 wards across five municipal corporations in the Greater Bengaluru Area, replacing the earlier 198-ward BBMP structure. *—PTI*

# India must be alert amid Iran war: Aviation Minister

**RANCHI, 20 MAY**

Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu on Wednesday said the country must be prepared to tackle any possible fallout of the escalating crisis in West Asia, although the situation was "not worrisome for India at present".

Naidu added that the Centre had already initiated measures to shield domestic passengers from burden, such as reduced aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices and landing and parking charges at airports.

"We are continuously monitoring airfares. If demand rises, we will increase connectivity and deploy more aircraft," Naidu said.

A report by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) titled 'Impact of the West Asia Conflict on India's Tourism, Aviation and Hospitality Sectors' said that the Indian aviation sector had been majorly impacted by the war in West Asia, due to flight cancellations, aerospace restrictions, international route diversions, and rising aviation fuel prices. These have led to losses mounting to Rs 18,000 crore for the industry.

- The aviation sector has been majorly impacted by the war in West Asia, due to flight cancellations, aerospace restrictions, international route diversions, and rising aviation fuel prices.

The report also says that Indian airlines cancelled around 1,770 international flights from 28 February to 5 March, 2026, due to the disruptions in the West Asia, one of the busiest flight corridors in the world.

The number represents 46 per cent of their scheduled international operations. *—PTI*

> **Iran would really be the first domino in what would set off a nuclear arms race all over the world**
>
> —JD Vance, US VP

### NEW STRIKES WILL FORCE WAR BEYOND WEST ASIA: IRAN

**TEHRAN, 20 MAY**

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) on Wednesday issued a new statement warning "adversaries" (US and Israel) against any renewed military action targeting Iran, declaring that it could lead to the conflict expanding beyond West Asia, according to the Iranian state media Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB). In the official statement, the IRGC added, "… our crushing blows will hit you in places you cannot imagine."

The warning came amid heightened regional tensions involving Iran, the United States and Israel. The IRGC asserted that Iran had not yet deployed its full military capabilities, adding its "new regional and extra-regional capabilities will be activated" in case of further action.

The IRGC further claimed that the conflict had already spread throughout the region, as Tehran had warned, and added that its military posture would be demonstrated via its "power on the battlefield, not in empty statements on social media." *—ANI*

# India &Italy to aim for €20B trade by 2029

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni a pack of Melody toffees, sparking the viral "#Melodi" trend online *–x*

India and Italy on Wednesday upgraded their ties to a "special strategic partnership" and reaffirmed their target of expanding bilateral trade to Euro 20 billion by 2029, following wide-ranging talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in Rome.

Both leaders expressed deep concern over the situation in West Asia and its global impact, stressing the need for de-escalation, dialogue and diplomacy for lasting peace. They also called for freedom of navigation and the resumption of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.

Prime Minister Modi, who arrived in Rome on Tuesday on the final leg of his European tour, said India and Italy would leverage opportunities from the India-EU Free Trade Agreement and push for its early implementation. Bilateral trade stood at Euro 14.25 billion in 2025.

Cooperation will expand across defence, security, trade, technology, energy, AI, space, education and culture.

Modi highlighted plans for an India-Italy Innovation Centre linking startups, research bodies and industry. He said defence cooperation reflects deep mutual trust, with a new roadmap enabling co-development and co-production in helicopters, naval platforms, marine armament and electronic warfare. *—PTI*

*>>>More on Page 3*

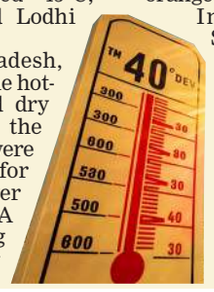
# Heatwave grips India, UP hottest in country at 48°C

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

North India reeled under an intense heatwave on Wednesday, with Uttar Pradesh's Banda recording the highest temperature in the country at 48°C, about 4.5 degrees above normal.

In Delhi, the Ridge station recorded a maximum of 45.8°C, making it the hottest spot in the national capital. Safdarjung, the city's base station, logged 44.5°C, while Ayanagar recorded 45°C, Palam 44.9°C and Lodhi Road 44.6°C.

In Uttar Pradesh, Banda remained the hottest location amid dry conditions, with the IMD issuing a severe heatwave alert for several areas over the coming week. A yellow warning has been issued for three days, followed by an orange alert.



In Rajasthan, Sriganganagar touched 46.5°C, while temperatures in Pilani, Phalodi, Bikaner, Churu, Alwar, Kota, Jaisalmer, Barmer and Jaipur ranged between 42°C and 45°C. TPunjab and Haryana also recorded severe heatwave conditions, with Rohtak at 46.9°C and Bathinda at 46.6°C. Chandigarh registered 44.4°C, its highest of the season.

In Himachal Pradesh, plains areas saw up to 44°C, while Shimla touched 30.5°C. The IMD issued a yellow alert for heatwave and thunderstorms in parts of the state.

Uttarakhand and Telangana also recorded temperatures near or above 40°C. *—PTI*

# Govt must know who is Backward: SC supports caste count in census

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

The Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected a PIL challenging the Centre's decision to conduct caste-based Census, saying the issue falls under the policy domain.

The top court said the government must know the number of persons belonging to backward castes to frame welfare measures.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul Pancholi did not agree to the submissions of PIL petitioner Sudhakar Gummula, who appeared in person to argue his case, that plenty of information and figures were available with the government on caste details.

"These are all policy matters, whether the Census should be caste-based or not. What is wrong with it? … the government must know as to how many people are in the Backward class, what kind of welfare measures are to be taken for them. It is within the policy domain," the CJI said while dismissing the PIL.

The 2027 Census, officially the 16th national Census, will be the first to include comprehensive caste enumeration since 1931 and the country's first fully digital census. *—PTI*

## Cops urge Twisha's kin to take body amid decomposition fears

**BHOPAL, 20 MAY**

Bhopal city police on Wednesday urged the family of Twisha Sharma, the daughter-in-law of a retired judge, to take custody of her body amid concerns that it could begin decomposing.

Sharma was found hanging at her marital home in the city on 12 May. Her body has been kept in the mortuary of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Bhopal, since her first postmortem examination was conducted on 13 May. Police said that preservation for a longer period required storage at minus 80 degrees Celsius, which is not available at AIIMS Bhopal.

Police had registered an FIR against Sharma's husband, advocate Samarth Singh, and her mother-in-law, retired judge Giribala Singh, with dowry death and harassment. Giribala Singh has denied the allegations. Sharma's family, meanwhile, has sought a second postmortem examination at AIIMS Delhi, alleging lapses in the local probe.

A Special Investigation Team is probing allegations of dowry harassment, physical assault and destruction of evidence in the case. *—PTI*

*>>>More on Page 4*

**AMID SAFETY CONCERNS**

# *No more open vehicles allowed for safaris in Karnataka*

**BENGALURU, 20 MAY**

Karnataka Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar Khandre on Wednesday directed officials to replace open camper vehicles with safer buses for safari operations across the state's tiger reserves and wildlife sanctuaries.

The order follows the incident at Dubare elephant camp in Karnataka's Kodagu district on May 18, where a tourist woman died during a clash between two trained elephants. Khandre instructed the Chief Wildlife Warden to prioritise tourist safety in all safari operations.

Safaris are conducted across major wildlife areas including Bandipur Tiger Reserve, Nagarahole Tiger Reserve, Kali, Biligirirangana Hills, Bhadra Tiger Reserve, Malai Mahadeshwara Hills, Dandeli and K Gudi, which attract tourists from across India and abroad.

In a statement, the Minister noted that no fatal attacks by wild animals on safari vehicles have been reported so far, but stressed the need for preventive measures before any such incidents occur.

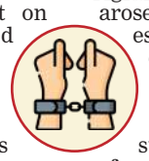
He ordered that open camper vehicles be replaced with fully secured buses, while existing campers must be fitted with iron grill protections or shatterproof glass before continued use. Tourists will also not be permitted to step out inside forest areas.

Khandre further directed that all safari vehicles must carry first-aid kits and that ambulance services be stationed near safari centres and elephant camps to ensure rapid emergency response. *—PTI*

## MAN JAILED FOR CALLING COURTS DICTATORSHIP

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday sentenced YouTuber and advocate Gulshan Pahuja to six months' jail in two criminal contempt cases over derogatory remarks against the judiciary.



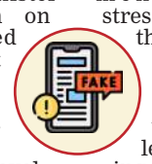
During the hearing, Pahuja repeated his "tanashahi" remark, alleging increasing rigidity in courts. The case arose after three district judges complained about videos on his YouTube channel 'Fight 4 Judicial Reforms'.

The High Court later suspended the sentence for 60 days to allow him to appeal before the Supreme Court. *—Agencies*

## GOVT CRACKS DOWN ON FAKE TELEGRAM CHANNELS AMID NEET LEAK

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Wednesday directed strict action against fake Telegram channels spreading misinformation ahead of the NEET-UG re-examination




Chairing a high-level meeting with security and intelligence agencies in New Delhi, Pradhan reviewed security arrangements and stressed foolproof conduct of the exam.

Officials also met Meta, Google and Telegram representatives over fake paper-leak claims and misleading online content creating panic among students and parents. *—PTI*

## 3 men pose as buyers, flee with Rs 3 crore gold

**BENGALURU, 20 MAY**

Police on Wednesday said an FIR has been filed against three men accused of cheating Mehta Gold Pvt Ltd and fleeing with gold ornaments worth about Rs 3 crore after posing as wholesale buyers. The incident took place in Malleswaram on 16 May and was captured on CCTV. According to the complaint filed by a sales manager, the FIR named the accused as Soni, Rao and Shyam, intending to commit theft, pretended to inspect the jewellery before stealing the ornaments and fleeing. The stolen jewellery weighed around 1 kg 850 grams. A case has been registered at the Malleswaram police station, and efforts are currently underway to trace and arrest the three accused. —*PTI*

— SALAR

## Hospital saves child with free surgery

**MUDDENAHALLI, 20 MAY**

Doctors at the Sri Madhusudan Sai Institute of Medical Sciences in Muddenahalli successfully carried out a complex airway reconstruction surgery free of cost on a three-and-a-half-year-old girl from Chhattisgarh suffering from a life-threatening respiratory condition. The child, Shivangi Sharma, developed severe airway obstruction or subglottic stenosis following congenital heart surgery earlier this year. Several hospitals, including AIIMS in Chhattisgarh, reportedly declined to undertake the complex treatment. Specialists at the Muddenahalli hospital performed a series of advanced endoscopic procedures to reconstruct the child's airway on 18 May, enabling her to breathe and speak normally. Dr KB Bali, Head of the ENT Department, described the procedure as one of the rarest forms of paediatric airway reconstruction.—*SALAR NEWS*

# 80 per cent farmers back township project: DKS

## Rejects 'mafia' charge; says compensation will start on 1 June

**BENGALURU, 20 MAY**

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday said that the proposed Greater Bengaluru Integrated Suburban Township Project at Bidadi near Ramanagara has secured consent from nearly 80 per cent of farmers, with compensation disbursal set to begin from 1 June.

Addressing reporters in Bengaluru, Shivakumar said financial allocations for the Rs 18,133 crore project would start from the first week of June, following village-wise notifications to be issued within three days.

Shivakumar further said farmers had urged the government to expedite compensation, and that slightly higher compensation was being offered.

The project, approved by the State Cabinet on 30 April, will cover around 7,481 acres across nine villages in Bengaluru South district and Ramanagara taluk.

DK Shivakumar consults farmer representatives for the Greater Bengaluru Comprehensive Suburban Project in Kumarapark on Wednesday —*ANI*

Shivakumar said the township would be integrated through Kanakapura Road, Bengaluru–Mysuru Road, NICE Road and the Satellite Town Ring Road (STRR), with nearly 40km of road connectivity planned.

He said the initiative, which had earlier been linked to private participation through DLF before being withdrawn, was not new and had originated during a previous tenure of former Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy. He added that the area had since been classified as a "red zone", restricting private transactions, with court orders upholding the status.

Shivakumar also challenged Kumaraswamy's criticism of the project, saying he was ready for a public debate at any time. He urged the Union Minister to focus instead on reducing steel and cement prices.

Rejecting allegations of "real estate mafia", he said previous governments had also initiated private involvement in the project and accused the Opposition of politicising development.

He said farmers had been advised not to rush land sales, adding that property values would rise significantly after infrastructure development.

In a separate statement marking three years of the Congress government, Shivakumar said Karnataka's guarantee schemes had become a national model, benefiting about 1.34 crore families with nearly Rs 1.30 lakh crore in welfare spending. He said schemes such as Gruha Lakshmi, Gruha Jyothi, Shakti, Anna Bhagya and Yuva Nidhi had been widely recognised and even studied internationally. —*PTI*

**'ONLY A CONCEPT'**

# No proposed merger of Tumakuru, B'luru: HM clarifies

**TUMAKURU, 20 MAY**

Minister of Home Affairs **G Parameshwara** on Wednesday clarified he has not proposed merging Tumakuru with Bengaluru under "Bengaluru North," saying he was misinterpreted.

Parameshwara, who is also Tumakuru district in-charge, said he was referring only to a conceptual idea to promote the district as part of the broader Bengaluru economic region to attract investment. "What I said..was just a concept... Neither Tumakuru's name nor its boundaries will be changed. It will remain as it is," he said.

Explaining the intent behind his remarks, he said the idea was to position Tumakuru as part of the Bengaluru growth corridor to encourage investors from abroad. "If it is considered part of Bengaluru, people in the US, UK or elsewhere may think of investing here. We are not changing anything; not even a stick will be moved," he added.

His comments follow an address on Tuesday marking three years of the Congress government, where he noted Tumakuru's proximity to Bengaluru, about 60 km away, and suggested it could be integrated into the Bengaluru region on the lines of Ramanagara being referred to as Bengaluru South by Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar.

The remarks sparked political reactions. BJP MP P C Mohan criticised the proposal on X, saying that at this rate other regions could also be renamed under the Bengaluru label, including coastal and northern districts, as a sarcastic remark on the idea of expansion. —*PTI*

**ASSAULT CASE**

# FIR filed against former minister H Vishwanth

**MYSURU, 20 MAY**

Devaraja police have registered a FIR against former Karnataka minister and MLC **H Vishwanath** for allegedly assaulting a realtor for asking him to return Rs 55 lakh that he had borrowed from him in 2013.

The realtor Kotehundi Mahadevu registered a case against H Vishwnath. Following directions from the court, the police registered a case against the former minister.

In a police complaint, earlier, Mahadevu alleged that he had given Rs 55 lakh hand loan to the former minister in the presence of his son Amith V Devarahatti after he was elected as MP in 2013 through former minister and former Hosakote MLA MTB Nagaraj.

Mahadevu further alleged that Vishwanath assaulted him when he asked him to return the Rs 55 lakh amount he had borrowed from him at Jaladarshini Guest House in February this year. Devaraju Police has filed an NCR in this case.

As Devaraju Police refused to file FIR in this regard, Mahadevu, approached the court which directed the police to look into this case.

Meanwhile, Vishwanath dismissed the case as politically motivated and said it was aimed at maligning his image. He alleged that Kotehundi filed complaint against him under the influence of Chief Minister's son Yathindra Siddaramaiah because he has spoken against their alleged corrupt practices. —*Salar News*

# Stir against e-pharmacies sees mixed response in State

**BENGALURU, 20 MAY**

A nationwide strike call by the All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD) against e-pharmacies saw a mixed response across Karnataka on Wednesday, with several medical shops remaining shut in many districts while others continued normal operations.

In Bengaluru, the impact was uneven. While many pharmacies downed shutters in support of the protest, several outlets in areas such as Halasuru remained open and served customers as usual.

However, the shutdown saw stronger participation in districts including Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Gadag, Tumakuru, Bagalkot and Shivamogga, where a significant number of medical stores remained closed through the day. In Mysuru, some chemists also operated while wearing black bands as a mark of protest.

The Bruhat Bengaluru Chemists and Druggists Association (BBCDA) clarified earlier that it would not participate in the bandh and that member pharmacies would remain open in the interest of the public. "

Meanwhile, Karnataka Chemists and Druggists Association (KCDA) president

Medical shops in Bengaluru remained closed on Wednesday as part of a protest against the online sale of medicines —*SALAR*

R Raghunatha Reddy said most chemists had supported the strike, alleging repeated violations of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act by e-pharmacies. He claimed online platforms were offering heavy discounts, disrupting the regulated 16–20 per cent margin structure and affecting small retailers.

He also alleged concerns over patient safety, saying medicines were being sold without proper prescription checks, unlike physical pharmacies.

Veeranarayana Gowda, a chemist in Lakkasandra Extension, said he closed his shop at 10.30 pm on Tuesday and joined the protest, arguing that medicines are a controlled commodity and should not be treated like regular consumer goods. —*PTI*

## No leadership tiff: DKS after meet with Kharge

**BENGALURU, 20 MAY**

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday dismissed speculation of a power tussle within the ruling Congress, saying recent discussions with party President Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leaders focused only on governance and strengthening the party.

Media reports had suggested that Kharge held talks with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar, fuelling speculation over a possible leadership change and cabinet expansion in Karnataka.

According to party sources, Kharge travelled from Thiruvananthapuram to Bengaluru with Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar before discussions were held at the residence of Energy Minister K J George on Monday.

On reports that senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi may call him to Delhi, Shivakumar said he would go if invited, adding that such a meeting could happen by the end of the month. —*PTI*

# Fishermen advised to avoid the sea till 25 May

**UDUPI, 20 MAY**

Fishermen along the Karnataka coast have been advised not to venture into the sea from 20 to 25 May following a weather warning issued by India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Emergency Response Control Room (ICR-ER) under the Union Home Ministry.

In Karnataka, authorities said the advisory has been issued due to expected rough sea conditions and strong winds over the Arabian Sea. Wind speeds of 40–50 kmph are likely along the Karnataka and Kerala coasts, as well as over Lakshadweep, Maldives and the Comorin region between 20 May and 22 May, with gusts reaching up to 60 kmph in some areas.

The warning added that parts of the southwest Arabian Sea, especially near the Somalia coast, may experience winds of 45–55 kmph with gusts up to 65 kmph. Similar strong winds of 40–50 kmph are expected over the Gulf of Mannar, southwest and southeast Bay of Bengal, and the Andaman Sea. In some areas along the Sri Lanka coast and adjoining southwest Bay of Bengal, wind speeds could exceed 65 kmph.

- Karnataka authorities said the advisory has been issued due to expected rough sea conditions and strong winds over the Arabian Sea.

Fishermen already at sea have been strictly advised to return to shore immediately. Authorities have urged coastal communities to follow official IMD advisories and avoid venturing into the sea during the alert period. The warning has been communicated to all coastal states and Union Territories, including Karnataka, Kerala, Goa, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, which remain on high alert. —*Salar News*

## 8 held in B'luru with MDMA from Delhi worth Rs 35 crore

**BENGALURU, 20 MAY**

Eight people were arrested for allegedly selling banned narcotics in the city, police said on Wednesday. With the arrests, police seized a total of Rs 35 crore of MDMA, two cars and four phones.

The contraband is estimated to be worth around Rs 35 crore in the illegal market. The action was initiated by Hebbal police following a tip-off on 11 May. According to police, three of the accused, including a woman, were taken into custody from Anandnagar.

The accused allegedly confessed to buying cheap MDMA in Delhi to resell in Bengaluru. After seizing 4.18 kg of the drug, police produced the suspects in court, and remanded to custody for 10 days.

Further interrogation revealed that additional quantities of MDMA had been stored at the residence of one of the accused in Chikkanayakanahalli. Accordingly, on 14 May, police seized 10.12 kg of MDMA.

Following this, four others were arrested in Haryana and Delhi, police said. Of the four later arrested, three were foreign nationals, including two women. —*PTI*

**DRY LAKES, WET ROADS**

An overflowing manhole on Vijayanagar Pipeline Road in Bengaluru posed a risk to motorists on Wednesday, with sewage spilling onto the stretch and disrupting traffic movement in the area —*SALAR*

# Aerospace defence firm to invest ₹6,000 cr in K'taka

**BENGALURU, 20 MAY**

Bengaluru-based aerospace and defence company AxisCades Aerospace Infrastructure Private Ltd is set to invest Rs 6,000 crore in Karnataka, Industries Minister **MB Patil** said on Wednesday.

Patil added that it aims to establish a hub near Devanahalli "across 200 acres for manufacturing, testing, and maintenance in aerospace, defence, semiconductor, and AI innovation." The project could generate 20,000 direct and 54,000 indirect jobs in the state, he claimed.

"The company also plans to set up a domestic research and development centre under global partnerships," Patil said. He added that it further intends to develop aerospace and defence infrastructure, such as missile sub systems, radar and sensor systems, and Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul facilities for fighter aircraft.

"In the first phase, the company will invest Rs 1,290 crore, followed by Rs 2,898 crore in the second phase and Rs 1,512 crore in the third phase," he added. The company has also expressed its intention to build a 1.8-km-long runway, he said. —*PTI*

**COACHING CENTRE BLAMED**

# *Bihar student kills self over harassment*

**BENGALURU, 20 MAY**

A 23-year-old student at a private coaching academy here allegedly died by suicide due to mental harassment and humiliation in front of his class over poor academic performance, police said on Wednesday.

The deceased is Chunnu Kumar, a native of Bereva village in Bihar's East Champaran.

Following a complaint by Kumar's father, a case has been registered at Kothanur Police Station under Sections 108 (abetment of suicide), 351(2) (criminal intimidation), and 352 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita against academy staff, a senior police officer said.

According to the FIR, Kumar had joined the banking coaching programme at the private academy in March.

On 18 May Kumar's father received a phone call from the hostel informing him that his son had died by suicide.

The next day, when he arrived at the academy with his family and spoke to Kumar's friends, they told him that Kumar had repeatedly said the academy management, Head of Department, and Programme Head were mentally harassing him

The complainant said Kumar's friends further stated that, after Kumar failed in some subjects, he was allegedly called into a classroom and humiliated in front of others. "They (academy management) allegedly told him that he was incapable in every respect, assigned him excessive project work, used abusive language in front of others, insulted him, and subjected him to mental harassment," the FIR stated. —*PTI*

*Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.*

# History-sheeter nabbed at daughter's wedding

**KOLAR GOLD FIELDS, 20 MAY**

Andersonpet police in KGF arrested a history-sheeter during his daughter's wedding ceremony on Tuesday and later booked for allegedly obstructing and attempting to assault police on duty.

The accused, Stanley, 68, a of Loordhnagar under Andersonpet police, is facing multiple charges, and had recently been externed to Alanda town in Kalaburagi district until May next year.

Police said Stanley was involved in at least 12 criminal cases registered at two police stations in KGF, and was allegedly known for threatening traders in the Andersonpet area. He and his son Lenin were recently arrested in an extortion case and sent to judicial custody.

Considering his criminal background, KGF SP Shivamshu Rajput issued externment orders against Stanley on 2 May, directing him to stay in Alanda town until May next year. However, police later received information that he returned to KGF.

Acting on a tip-off that Stanley was attending his daughter's wedding at St Joseph Church in Susaipalyam, Andersonpet Police rushed to the venue.

Police reportedly found Stanley actively participating in the ceremony. When officers informed him about the externment violation and pending cases against him, Stanley and some of his family members allegedly abused the police personnel, threatened them and attempted to assault them.

Despite the commotion, police managed to secure Stanley's arrest and brought him to the Andersonpet police station. A fresh case was subsequently registered against him for allegedly obstructing police officials from discharging their duties. —*Salar News*

— PTI

## Dalit Cong leaders get notice after visiting Mayawati

**LUCKNOW, 20 MAY**

An unscheduled, unauthorised visit by a delegation of Dalit Congress leaders, including Scheduled Caste Department national chairman Rajendra Pal Gautam and leader Tanuj Punia, to Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati's Lucknow residence on Tuesday has led to controversy. "The party has issued show-cause notices to the leaders," Congress's Uttar Pradesh in-charge Avinash Pande said. On Wednesday, Punia said that the visit was a "goodwill gesture" and not to convey a message from party leader Rahul Gandhi. The visit came hours after Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav hinted that his party's alliance with Congress will continue for the 2027 UP polls. —*PTI*

## New Puducherry Assembly Members take oath

**PUDUCHERRY, 20 MAY**

Newly elected members of the Union Territory of Puducherry, including Chief Minister N Rangasamy, took oath as Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) on Wednesday in the presence of pro-tem Speaker A Anbalagan in the 30-member House. Legislators belonging to the All India N. R. Congress (AINRC), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Congress and Independents took oath in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam or English. The AINRC-led NDA had won the elections. Rangasamy had successfully contested from Thattanchavady and Mangalam and has resigned from the former. —*PTI*

—ANI

## Politicising Zubeen's death hit Cong: Himanta

**GUWAHATI, 20 MAY**

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday claimed "politicising" musician Zubeen Garg's death backfired for the Congress-led opposition in the Assembly polls. The Congress and its allies had criticised the Assam government during election campaigns over the alleged delay in setting up the fast-track court in the case of his death. It had also criticised the BJP as no national party leader visited his cremation grounds and guaranteed giving justice to Garg within 100 days of government formation. Sarma visited Garg's cremation ground, 'Zubeen Khetra' to pay tribute to the late singer and review the development work underway there. —*PTI*

## Medha Kulkarni to head panel on science

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

Rajya Sabha Chairman CP Radhakrishnan has nominated BJP member Medha Vishram Kulkarni as chairperson of the department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change. Kulkarni's appointment took place on 18 May, a notification from the Rajya Sabha Secretariat said. The committee scrutinises government policies, reviews budgetary allocations and evaluates legislation for key scientific and environmental departments. Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has also appointed BJP member Sudheer Gupta as Chairperson of the Joint Committee on Corporate Laws Bill, 2026. —*PTI*

# Kerala CM to handle 35 depts; IUML gets Industries & IT

### Ramesh Chennithala to look after Home, Vigilance

**T'PURAM, 20 MAY**

The portfolios of ministers in the UDF government in Kerala were finalised on Wednesday, with Chief Minister VD Satheesan taking 35 departments, including Finance, Law, General Administration and Ports.

Satheesan has recommended to Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar the portfolios to be allocated to the cabinet ministers who were sworn in along with him on 18 May, and it has been approved by the governor, a communication from Lok Bhavan said.

Satheesan will handle 35 departments including Finance, Law, General Administration and Ports, while senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala was designated as Minister for Home, Vigilance and three other departments, Lok Bhavan said.

IUML leader PK Kunhalikutty will handle Industries and Commerce, IT, AI, Start-ups, Mining and Geology and Handlooms and Textiles, it said.

Satheesan addresses the media after the cabinet meeting —*PTI*

KPCC chief Sunny Joseph was given Electricity, Environment and Parliamentary Affairs, while senior party leader K Muraleedharan will handle Devaswoms, Food Safety and Medical Education, the Lok Bhavan said.

Roji M John will handle Higher Education, AP Anil Kumar will head Land and Revenue and N Shamsudheen will be General Education Minister, it said.

RSP MLA Shibu Baby John got Forests and Wildlife Protection and Skill Development, while Kerala Congress (Joseph) MLA Mon Joseph will head the Irrigation, Ground Water, Water Supply and Sanitation and Housing Departments, the Lok Bhavan added.

Chief Minister Satheesan asserted that there would be no compromise on the secular stand of the Congress-led UDF, saying the front would strongly oppose communalism.

He said there was no change in the secular position adopted by him and the UDF.

The CM was responding to questions regarding his recent visits to see Christian bishops before and after assuming office. — *PTI*

### 'Didn't know about Vande Mataram'

Chief Minister Satheesan said on Wednesday that the full rendition of Vande Mataram at the UDF government's swearing-in ceremony was as per a decision taken by Lok Bhavan, and that neither he nor his colleagues knew about it.

### Satheesan defends himself on caste

Responding to criticism for using the name of his caste during the swearing-in ceremony, Chief Minister Satheesan defended himself saying that he had only mentioned his father's name and saw nothing wrong in doing so on such an occasion.

## UDF GOVT SCRAPS LDF'S SILVERLINE HIGH-SPEED RAILWAY LINE PROJECT

**T'PURAM, 20 MAY**

Chief Minister Satheesan announced on Wednesday that his government has scrapped the controversial SilverLine semi-high-speed rail project, ending the flagship infrastructure initiative of the LDF government led by Pinarayi Vijayan.

The anti-SilverLine agitation evolved into one of the fiercest mass mobilisations against the Vijayan government, helping the UDF regain ground in Kerala as protests over land acquisition, environmental concerns and displacement galvanised public anger across the state.

The Left government's 530-km SilverLine project, planned by K-Rail—a joint venture between the Kerala government and the Ministry of Railways—was expected to reduce travel time between the two ends of the state to just four hours.

Extensive protests against the project were held across the state, led by the Congress. Protesters uprooted and discarded many yellow markers associated with the project.

The CM said the decision was taken because the project had been abandoned and no transactions could be carried out regarding the lands notified for acquisition, which affected ordinary people.

As the state has abandoned the project, even the Central government did not grant approval, he said. — *PTI*

## EC DOUBLES SECURITY FOR WB'S FALTA RE-ELECTION

**KOLKATA, 20 MAY**

The Election Commission has nearly doubled the security arrangements for the 21 May re-poll in West Bengal's Falta Assembly constituency that was countermanded last month over allegations of large-scale EVM tampering, a senior poll panel official said on Wednesday.

An official at the state Chief Electoral Office said that eight Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) personnel, equivalent to one full section, will be deployed at each polling booth.

During the 29 April polling that was ultimately countermanded, only four personnel, or half a section, had been stationed at each booth, he added.

"The poll panel does not want to leave any room for irregularities this time. Security arrangements have therefore been strengthened," an official of the poll panel told PTI.

Falta has 285 polling booths, and around 35 companies of Central forces will be deployed to ensure smooth voting, the official said, adding that deployment of security forces for the re-poll would be double that of the original polling day.

Additionally, 30 quick response teams will remain on standby to respond swiftly to any disturbance. — *PTI*

# Kolkata mayor distances himself from notices issued to Abhishek

**KOLKATA, 20 MAY**

Mayor Firhad Hakim on Wednesday distanced himself from the notices issued by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) to properties allegedly linked to TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee, asserting that such matters are handled by the civic body's executive wing and do not come under the purview of elected representatives.

Bengal govt notified the Annapurna Yojna for women, providing a monthly allowance of ₹ 3,000 from 1 June.

The TMC-run KMC issued notices seeking sanctioned building plans and related documents for scrutiny from several properties allegedly linked to Banerjee, his family members and a company.

Speaking to reporters during assembly proceedings, Hakim, who is also the TMC MLA of Kolkata Port, said the role of elected representatives in the civic body is limited to policy-making.

"This does not fall under my jurisdiction. The person who received the notice can explain the matter better. I cannot comment on a personal issue. I am here only to explain the laws of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation," he said.

Meanwhile, Trinamool Congress MP Saayoni Ghosh defended herself on Wednesday against allegations linking her to a Kolkata property allegedly associated with Abhishek Banerjee by dismissing the claims as "fake news" and warning of legal action against those spreading it.

Ghosh, who was already in the spotlight a day earlier after alleging she received an "open death threat" from a BJP leader in UP, said attempts were now being made to malign her through "fake news" over property.

In a post on X, Saayoni Ghosh denied media allegations that she jointly owns a property at "19 D Seven Tanks Road, Kolkata 700030" with TMC's Abhishek. — PTI

### Absence of TMC MLAs triggers rumours

**KOLKATA, 20 MAY**

The absence of many TMC legislators from the party's first major protest programme on Wednesday after its defeat in the 2026 West Bengal Assembly polls triggered chatter, with the development coming a day after internal discussions reportedly centred on the need for the party to return to street politics.

A section of TMC MLAs staged a sit-in near the Ambedkar statue on the assembly premises against "post-poll violence" and hawker eviction drives, marking the party's first coordinated agitation after being pushed to the opposition benches after 15 years in power.

Among those present were Sovandeb Chattopadhyay, Nayana Banerjee, Kunal Ghosh and Ritabrata Banerjee.

However, of the 80 MLAs, only 35 turned up at the programme, leading to speculation over possible fault lines within the organisation at a time when the party is struggling to regroup after its electoral setback. — PTI

VIJAY TEAM'S EXPANSION

# TVK asks Cong, VCK, Left, IUML to join cabinet

**CHENNAI, 20 MAY**

The Tamil Nadu Minister for Public Works and Sports Development, Adhav Arjuna, extended an invitation to the Congress, the VCK and the IUML to join the TVK cabinet.

He said that Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay wants the cabinet to function as "one family" with the Congress, VCK, CPI, CPI-M and IUML which helped to form the government.

Arjuna said that the DMK and AIADMK have tried to prevent the TVK from forming a government by aligning with each other to come to power.

"Both the CM and the TVK share the same vision that parties committed to social justice should join the Cabinet. The Congress extended immense support to us," he said.

Claiming that the chief minister has emphasised that Congress must join the Cabinet, Arjuna said: "At the same time, we will always respect the decision of the Left to extend support from outside."

Stating that the TVK government will always be committed to social justice and secular principles Arjuna said, "Similarly, we extend an invitation to the leader of the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) led by chief Thol Thirumavalavan, to join the cabinet, which is also the wish of the Chief Minister."

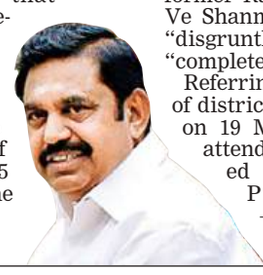
Arjuna said that the AIADMK rebel group led by C Ve Shanmugam supported TVK during the floor test to "save" their party and not for ministerial berths.

"They made every effort to impose President's rule in Tamil nadu. The parties behind this were the DMK and the AIADMK," he alleged. — *PTI*

## '95 per cent of AIADMK workers support EPS'

**CHENNAI, 20 MAY**

Rejecting claims of rebellion and factionalism, the AIADMK asserted on Wednesday that general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami (EPS) enjoyed the support of more than 95 per cent of the party's base.



Senior AIADMK leader and Tiruvannamalai South District Secretary "Agri" SS Krishnamoorthy dismissed allegations made by former Rajya Sabha MP C Ve Shanmugam and other "disgruntled elements" as "completely false."

Referring to the meeting of district secretaries held on 19 May, he said the attendance demonstrated the support for Palaniswamy. — PTI

## Simultaneous polls can save Rs 7 lakh crore: JPC

**GANDHINAGAR, 20 MAY**

India can save Rs 7 lakh crore if Lok Sabha and assembly polls are held simultaneously, and that money can be used for development projects, PP Chaudhary, the chairman of the Joint Parliamentary Committee examining the 'One Nation, One Election' proposal, said. The JPC, which is examining the proposal for simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and assemblies, embarked on its three-day visit to Gujarat on Tuesday.

Chaudhary also directed the Gujarat chief secretary to submit a comprehensive report on the inputs of all the departments regarding the proposal.

On Tuesday, the panel held a meeting with bureaucrats, Chief Secretary MK Das, BJP functionaries, and secretaries of departments in Gandhinagar's GIFT City.

After the meeting, JPC chairperson BJP MP Chaudhary told reporters that state officials gave a detailed presentation, highlighting critical issues that had not been considered earlier. "We have asked them to prepare a comprehensive report, which can subsequently be used as a model by other states so that they can submit their reports in that format," he said.

The report should assess the impact on industries, production losses, labour migration, employment, GST collections, the economy, he said. — PTI

## Modi, Shah traitors who sold Hindustan: Rahul

**RAEBARELI, 20 MAY**

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi termed Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and the RSS "traitors" who are attacking the Constitution every day and have "sold" the country's interests to some industrialists.

Rahul's strong allegations came on the second day of his visit to his constituency.

**Rahul Gandhi's "terror" remarks against Prime Minister Modi reflects his anarchic mindset and character and his frustration and disappointment over his party's defeats. It is an insult to the 140 crore people of this country. He should apologise**

-Nitin Nabin, BJP President

Gandhi was addressing a 'Bahujan Swabhiman Sabha' in Raebareli, commemorating local revolutionary Veera Pasi.

At the rally, Gandhi accused the prime minister of "attacking the Constitution 24 hours a day" by weakening MNREGA, not conducting caste census, and favouring some industrialists. He also referred to Modi's recent appeal to cut down on fuel consumption, gold purchase, and foreign travel to warn of an "economic storm" coming our way.

Gandhi said that the war between Iran and the US will lead to a major shock.

He said that fertiliser shortages will hit farmers and kerosene supply could be disrupted, but the economic impact would not affect "Ambani and Adani," only ordinary citizens.

"Today, when petrol prices are rising, Ambani is exporting fuel outside India. He buys oil from Russia and sells it abroad, and that money is used to fund Modi," he alleged. Earlier, he said remembering Ambedkar, Veera Pasi, and Mahatma Gandhi was meaningful only if their ideology is protected."The Veera Pasis, Ambedkars and Gandhis of the 21st century will come from you. They will not come from the sky," he said. — *PTI*

## NCP (SP) RULES OUT MERGER WITH SUNETRA-LED NCP

**MUMBAI, 20 MAY**

Maharashtra NCP (SP) president Shashikant Shinde said on Wednesday that the issue of merger with the ruling NCP is over, ruling out any future discussion amid renewed speculation triggered by a meeting between party chief Sharad Pawar and NCP leader Sunil Tatkare.

After attending a party meeting chaired by Sharad Pawar, the NCP (SP) state unit president said the focus is on strengthening the party and intensifying public movements under the banner of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra.

The meeting took place against the backdrop of reports of internal strife in the ruling NCP led by Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar, where party veterans Tatkare and Praful Patel have been sidelined. Tatkare met Sharad Pawar in Mumbai last week.

Sharad Pawar, who heads the NCP (SP), chaired the key party meet to discuss the political situation in the country and Maharashtra and formulate strategies to revive the party. — *PTI*

MODI IN ITALY

# *'India-Italy relationship now a special strategic partnership'*

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic, Giorgia Meloni, said the relationship between India and Italy has now reached a decisive stage, evolving from a cordial friendship into a special strategic partnership.

In an article, jointly written by the two leaders for the Indian and Italian media, Modi and Meloni said that at a time when the international system is undergoing a profound change, the partnership between the two countries is guided by regular exchanges at higher political and institutional levels.

Modi is currently in Italy as part of the final leg of his five-nation tour.

The two leaders said the relationship is gaining a new and higher dimension that combines the economic dynamism, societal creativity, and millennia-old civilisational wisdom of the two countries.

PM Modi and his Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni in Rome —*PTI*

The two leaders said the cooperation between India and Italy mirrors the awareness that prosperity and security in the 21st century will be shaped by the ability of nations to innovate, manage energy transitions, and strengthen strategic sovereignty.They said the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and India paves the way for increased trade and investment in both directions. The growing interest of Italian businesses in the production of goods for India and the increasing presence of Indian companies in Italy, numbering over 1,000 from both sides, is a positive sign that will strengthen tour supply chains, they said. — *PTI*

— PTI

## Drone dropped drugs found in J&K border area

**JAMMU, 20 MAY**

Security forces recovered a suspected drone-dropped packet possibly containing narcotics from the border area of Jammu district, official sources said. The packet was recovered from Bahadurpur Panchayat in the Bishnah area after a local spotted it while tilling his field. The BSF and police rushed to the spot and cordoned off the area. The packet was seized and a forensic science laboratory (FSL) team was called to examine its contents, they said, adding that the material is suspected to be heroin.—*PTI*

## 10 face Gangster Act in UP 'gym jihad' case

**MIRZAPUR, 20 MAY**

The Mirzapur Police have invoked the Gangster Act against 10 people in the alleged "gym jihad" case and is pressing charges of coercion, blackmail and forced religious conversion of women, officials said. The accused, including alleged gang leader Imran Khan and Maulana Khaliluddin, have been arrested and are in the Mirzapur district jail, the police said on Tuesday. A chargesheet was filed earlier. Police said the gang befriended women visiting gyms, established physical relations, recorded their photos and videos, and then blackmailed them for money and to convert. The police alleged that women were made to wear burqas and recite religious verses.—*PTI*

— ANI

## Copter lands in Badrinath due to tech fault

**NEW TEHRI, 20 MAY**

A private helicopter carrying pilgrims from Delhi to Badrinath was forced to make an emergency landing on Wednesday in the Chamba-Arakot area here due to a technical glitch, officials said. Dhanaulti tehsildar Mohammad Shadab said there were seven people aboard, including the pilot, and they are safe. The pilgrims belong to a family in Delhi's Punjabi Bagh. A technical issue developed in the Trans Bharat Aviation company's helicopter while it was flying over the Chamba-Arakot area around 8.30 am, and it had to execute an emergency landing in a field in Nawagaon. The copter's rear section was damaged after coming into contact with a high-tension power line. —*PTI*

## Man kills daughter over affair with neighbour

**ALIGARH, 20 MAY**

In a case of honour killing, a man allegedly strangled his 19-year-old daughter to death and buried her body in a field here after opposing her relationship with a neighbour, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place in Jarrara village on Monday night. Superintendent of Police (Rural) Manish Mishra told reporters that the accused, identified as Pooran Singh, was against his daughter's friendship with a boy from the neighbourhood whom she wanted to marry. During questioning, the accused allegedly confessed to the crime and led police to the spot where the body had been buried in a nearby field. The body has been sent for postmortem examination and the accused was arrested on Tuesday night, police said—*PTI*

# Nationwide chemists' strike evokes lukewarm response

### They are demanding action against 'illegal' online pharmacies

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

The one-day strike called by the All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists against unregulated practice and deep discounting by online players evoked a lukewarm response, even as the body claimed overwhelming support from its members across the country.

All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD) claims to represent 12.4 lakh chemists, pharmacists, and distributors, and is demanding action against what it termed as "illegal" operations of online pharmacies.

"The nationwide strike remained completely peaceful and received overwhelming support from chemists and druggists across India," AIOCD said in a statement.

Essential and emergency medicines were also made available to needy patients as part of the association's humanitarian responsibility, it added.

Various state chemists and druggists associations, chemists and druggists across all districts in the country kept their establishments closed and extended unanimous support to the movement, the statement said.

However, in the National Capital Region, outlets of some organised pharmacy chains were operating.

"We are not a part of the strike," said one sales executive when asked about the nationwide strike call given by AIOCD.

Another independent chemist also said his shop remained open during the day and business went on as usual.

AIOCD said it called the one-day nationwide strike "against illegal and uncontrolled online sale of medicines, sale of medicines without valid prescriptions, and predatory deep discounting practices by online medicine platforms".

AIOCD President J S Shinde and General Secretary Rajiv Singhal said a memorandum addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi was submitted through Divisional Commissioners, District Collectors, SDMs and Tehsildars across the country. It also highlighted concerns about unregulated online sale of medicines. —*PTI*

All India Organisation of Chemists and Druggists (AIOCD) called the strike against 'illegal' operations of online pharmacies —*ANI*

Police personnel detain the aspirants of Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) during a protest in Patna on Wednesday —*PTI*

# Patna cops detain protesting teacher job aspirants

**PATNA, 20 MAY**

Police on Wednesday detained several aspirants protesting here against the state government's alleged delay in the notification of the fourth phase of the Teacher Recruitment Examination.

Officials said that the protesters were detained while preparing to take out a march from Ashok Rajpath to the Dak Bunglow crossing.

They were protesting against the "delay" in the release of a notification for the Teacher Recruitment Examination-4 by the Bihar Public Service Commission, an official said.

"The Protestors were detained between Patna College and Bihta before they could gather for the protest march. We have made it very clear that such a gathering can only be allowed at Gardani Bagh, a dedicated place for holding dharna," Patna SSP Kartikeya Sharma told PTI.

"Security personnel have already been deployed at all sensitive locations in Patna to check any untoward incidents and also to prevent such gatherings," he added.

Police on May 9 booked around 5,000 Teacher Recruitment Examination-4 aspirants and arrested four, including student leader Dilip Kumar, following clashes during a protest in Patna.

Officials further alleged that protesters disrupted traffic, breached barricades, disturbed public order and misbehaved with personnel deployed on duty on May 8 in the state capital. —*PTI*

# Mumbai slum demolition turns violent, 10 cops injured

**MUMBAI, 20 MAY**

At least 10 police personnel were injured after angry residents of a slum in Mumbai's Bandra area hurled stones at them during the razing of an alleged illegal religious structure on Wednesday, officials said.

The Western Railway on Tuesday launched a five-day anti-encroachment demolition drive in Gareeb Nagar slum area, following directions from the Bombay High Court. They sought to clear 5,200 square metres of encroached railway land under the jurisdiction of the Nirmal Nagar police station.

On the second day, the authorities started pulling down an allegedly illegal three-storey mosque in the slum. Angry residents claimed that they were not given adequate time to remove their belongings from the premises.

Police started lathi-charging gathered residents, injuring several people including a woman, an official said, adding that some residents then started throwing stones at the police, injuring at least 10 personnel. The police detained around 15 persons for stone-pelting.

"During the drive, some anti-social elements tried to obstruct the work by hurling stones at the demolition squad. The police used appropriate force to disperse them," said Additional Commissioner of Police Abhinav Deshmukh. An FIR is being registered and strict action will be taken, he added.

Police said over 1,000 personnel were deployed during the operation, with around 400 from the city police force, many from the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and Government Railway Police (GRP), and officials from railway departments. —*PTI*

Children look for their belongings during a demolition drive at Gareeb Nagar slum in Mumbai on Tuesday —*ANI*

## SC seeks govt's response on liquor in tetra packs

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

The Supreme Court on Wednesday sought responses from the Centre and other stakeholders on a plea seeking a ban on the sale of alcohol in "inconspicuous packaging" such as tetra packs and sachets.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi agreed to hear the petition filed by NGO Community Against Drunken Driving, and issued notices to the Centre and others, including the excise departments of all the states.

Advocate Vipin Nair, appearing for the petitioner, said the definition of "bottle" was vague under the excise regime and some standardisation must be there. When he referred to the packaging of some liquors in tetra packs bearing photos of a green apple, the bench observed, "This is very deceptive".

Nair said they are confusing fruit juice with liquor using photo of apple. —*PTI*

## Meghalaya hosts 13-nation anti-terror exercise

**GUWAHATI, 20 MAY**

A joint military exercise comprising defence personnel from 13 countries began in Meghalaya on Wednesday with a focus on counter-terrorism operations, officials said.

Defence PRO Lieutenant Colonel Mahender Rawat told PTI that multilateral military exercise 'PRAGATI 2026' commenced at Umroi Military Station with the participation of 12 friendly nations -- Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Vietnam.

"The two-week exercise will focus on counter-terrorism operations in semi-mountainous and jungle terrain. The training programme will include joint planning exercises, tactical-level drills and coordinated operations designed to improve adaptability, endurance and tactical proficiency," he added.

Rawat said the emphasis will be laid on physical fitness, discipline and coordination in challenging conditions.

"As part of the exercise, Indian technology and defence companies will showcase indigenous equipment and innovations under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, providing a platform for knowledge exchange and highlighting India's growing capabilities in defence production, innovation and self-reliance," he added. —*PTI*

# Man lynched in Odisha on suspicion of sorcery

**CUTTACK, 20 MAY**

A mob dragged a man out of his house in Odisha's Cuttack district, lynched him on the suspicion of practising black magic and then burnt his body to erase evidence, following which 25 people were arrested, police said on Wednesday.

While the incident occurred on May 10, the arrests were made on Tuesday, a day after the victim's father lodged a formal complaint with the police.

In the complaint, Sweta Behera claimed that his son, Tikima Behera, was dragged out of the house in Talamunduli village and beaten up by the mob on May 10, leading to his death. His body was burnt to erase evidence, the father alleged.

He mentioned that Tikima Behera was staying with his brother and sister-in-law at the village after his wife abandoned him seven years ago.

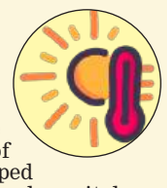
"So far, we have arrested 25 men of the village who allegedly killed the man on suspicion of performing black magic.

Three teams have been formed to probe th incident. One of the arrested accused confessed to the crime during interrogation," Cuttack (Rural) SP Vinit Agrawal told reporters.

He said police have also recovered the partially burnt body and bones of the deceased. —*PTI*

## Heatwave scorches Delhi for 2nd day at 45°C

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**



A n intense spell of heat gripped the national capital on Wednesday as Delhi recorded a heatwave for the second consecutive day, with temperatures hovering around the 45 degrees Celsius mark and the weather office maintaining an orange alert for the coming days amid forecasts of prolonged heatwave conditions. The alert will continue for Thursday with the maximum temperature likely to settle around 46 degrees Celsius. —*PTI*

# Punjab defers 'untimely' Rath Yatra after protest by Puri Jagannath temple

**PURI, 20 MAY**

The Ferozepur district administration in Punjab on Wednesday informed the authorities of the Jagannath Temple in Odisha's Puri that they have ensured the postponement of the Rath Yatra planned for 23 May after the shrine's officials protested against holding the festival on random dates.

The authorities of the Puri Jagannath Temple had written to Ferozepur District Magistrate Deepshikha Sharma, requesting her to prevent the temple in her jurisdiction from holding the Rath Yatra on 23 May.

Responding to Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) chief administrator Arabinda Padhee's letter, Sharma said the Ferozepur Jagannath Temple administration, which was organising the Rath Yatra, was called on 20 May and "were informed about the appropriate timing of the festival and the significance of Shri Jagannath Puri Ji".

"The temple administrators have provided their written consent to postpone the Rath Yatra," the Ferozepur district magistrate said.

Padhee thanked the Ferozepur district magistrate, saying, "I spoke to the DM, and her swift action and cooperation are appreciated. The Ferozepur temple has agreed to conduct Rath Yatra on 16 July as per the calendar."

Earlier, the SJTA, in a letter on Tuesday, had said that holding the Rath Yatra on random dates was a "sensitive matter" and hurt the religious sentiments of devotees.

The Puri temple reacted to the proposed untimely Ratha Yatra plan of the Ferozepur temple after it came across some publicity materials and social media posts in circulation. The SJTA said 23 May date for Rath yatra was not in consonance with the prescribed calendar. —*PTI*

**FAMILY SEEKS JUSTICE**

# *'Police open to Twisha's second autopsy'*

**BHOPAL, 20 MAY**

Bhopal Commissioner of Police Sanjay Kumar on Wednesday said they had no objection to a second post-mortem of Twisha Sharma, the daughter-in-law of a retired judge who was found hanging at her marital home here last week.

A local court here on Tuesday had summoned the police diary related to the case of 33-year-old Twisha, a Noida woman who was allegedly harassed for dowry, following a plea moved by her family seeking a second post-mortem at AIIMS Delhi.

"The family members of the deceased came to me and submitted an application. I told them police have no objection to another post-mortem," Kumar told PTI.

He said the application seeking a second autopsy has been attached to the case diary, but the permission for it rests with the court.

"We have carried out our investigation and examined the evidence. These things take some time," the police chief said. Kumar said police teams have been formed to arrest Twisha's husband, advocate Samarth Singh, who is absconding. Samarth and Twisha got married in December 2025.

The police commissioner's statement came on the day a Judicial Magistrate First Class court is scheduled to examine the case diary on the plea moved by Twisha's family seeking a fresh post-mortem examination.

Meanwhile, more than 50 ex-servicemen set out on motorbikes in Bhopal on Wednesday, demanding justice for Twisha Sharma.

They also demanded that the probe into the case be transferred outside Madhya Pradesh.

They said they would try to meet the state governor, chief minister and director general of police with a charter of demands related to the case of Twisha Sharma. —*PTI*

Navnidhi Sharma and Rekha Sharma, parents of Twisha Sharma, speaking to media in Bhopal —*PTI*

# Husband's mom held in Noida dowry case

**NOIDA, 20 MAY**

- Arrests include Poonam, mother of the victim's husband, and Vinod, the husband's uncle. The woman's husband, Hritik, and his father Manoj

Two more people were arrested on Wednesday in the alleged dowry death of a 24-year-old woman in Greater Noida, taking the total number of arrests in the case to four, police said.

The latest arrests include Poonam, the mother of the victim's husband, and Vinod, the husband's uncle. The woman's husband, Hritik, and his father Manoj had already been taken into custody earlier. A total of seven people have been named in the FIR.

The case relates to the death of Deepika Nagar, who died on Sunday night after allegedly falling from the terrace of her three-storey matrimonial home in Jalpura village. While her in-laws claimed it was an accident, her family alleged she was murdered over dowry demands.

According to the complaint filed by her father, Sanjay Nagar, Deepika had called him shortly before the incident, alleging she was being assaulted by her in-laws for dowry. The family claimed the accused had demanded a Toyota Fortuner SUV and Rs 45-50 lakh in cash. The postmortem report revealed brain haemorrhage and ruptured internal organs. —*PTI*

**A BREAK FROM HEAT**

A pleasant spell of weather offered Bengaluru respite from the scorching heat on Wednesday, with scattered clouds seen over Vidhana Soudha as temperatures settled around 27°C. Heatwave is baking India at almost 48 degree Celsius. —PTI

# India's sporting dream needs more than cricket glory

For years, India has celebrated sport in flashes, an Olympic medal, a world title, a stirring anthem at a distant arena that briefly unites millions. Then the spotlight swings back to cricket, IPL auctions and sponsorship battles, while athletes from other disciplines quietly return to fighting for recognition and financial security.

That uncomfortable reality resurfaced recently when India's star badminton pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty expressed disappointment over the lack of celebration for badminton achievements despite years of global success. Soon after, chess Grandmaster Abhijit Gupta revealed that an organiser delayed his prize money payment and that even the national federation was initially slow to intervene.

The problems go deeper. During the badminton nationals in Greater Noida earlier this year, players reportedly slept on floors after hostel fees were not paid on time. Similar complaints emerged from a domestic wrestling event in Gonda over poor arrangements.

These are not isolated incidents but signs of a sporting culture that still treats non-cricket athletes as temporary heroes rather than long-term national assets.

India has undeniably progressed in elite sports preparation. Government-backed schemes such as the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS), Target Asian Games Group (TAGG) and ACTC funds have transformed athlete support. Today's elite athletes travel with physiotherapists, nutritionists, psychologists and foreign coaches, systems that barely existed a decade ago.

But funding elite athletes alone does not create a sporting superpower. The deeper crisis lies in the absence of a strong sporting ecosystem that identifies, supports and values athletes long before they become champions.

Countries such as China and the United States demonstrate how systems shape sporting success.

In Dec 2025, a team of 18 student-wrestlers from Odisha was forced to sit on the floor near a toilet in a train while commuting to and from the 69th National School Wrestling Championship in Uttar Pradesh —SCREENGRAB

China's state-backed structure identifies talent early and develops athletes through discipline and repetition. Olympic swimming champion Ye Shiwen, for example, was identified young because of physical traits considered ideal for the sport and was groomed within the national system.

The United States follows a different route — school competitions, college sports, sponsorship pathways and professional leagues create a gradual but structured route to elite sport.

India's obsession with cricket is understandable. Cricket mastered television, built generations of icons and became commercially unstoppable. The IPL transformed players into year-round celebrities and turned sport into entertainment on a scale unmatched by any other federation.

More importantly, cricket built a reliable ecosystem. Middle-class families can now imagine a stable future through cricket. Most Olympic sports still cannot offer that certainty.

As a result, athletes in badminton, wrestling, chess, athletics or boxing often disappear from public attention outside major tournaments. Many federations remain plagued by poor administration, legal disputes and weak marketing.

That lack of visibility creates another damaging cycle — less attention means fewer sponsors, and fewer sponsors mean less financial security for athletes. Families hesitate to support sporting careers because the system still appears unstable.

Even elite athletes continue to worry about jobs and financial survival. Recently, an athlete reportedly asked whether competing in a wrestling tournament would help secure government employment, highlighting how survival often outweighs sporting ambition.

India's sporting ambitions also require realism. Investment alone does not guarantee global dominance. Britain's Lawn Tennis Association reportedly operates with a massive annual budget, yet the country has produced few Wimbledon champions despite hosting the tournament.

If India genuinely wants to become a sporting superpower, the country needs a cultural shift alongside financial investment.

Schools must stop treating sports as distractions. Physical education should be valued as seriously as academics. Stronger grassroots competitions are equally essential, as most Indian athletes still lack consistent, high-quality domestic tournaments.

Federations, too, must become professional and accountable. Athletes preparing for international events should never have to publicly chase unpaid dues or basic facilities.

India also needs a better sporting media culture. Coverage cannot revolve only around medals. Fans connect with stories, rivalries and personalities. Sporting nations create heroes before podium finishes, not only after them.

Most importantly, India must learn to value athletes beyond cricket. A boxer, wrestler, chess player or archer carries the same national flag as a cricketer. The encouraging sign is that India is no longer questioning whether it can compete globally. Indian athletes now challenge the world confidently across badminton, athletics, shooting, boxing, wrestling, hockey and chess.

But many still feel unseen at home.

The true measure of a sporting superpower is not how loudly it celebrates champions after victory. It is whether athletes ever feel abandoned before it. —PTI

SALAR سالار

# Saw AI crash pilot's body in seated position gripping controls: Victim's kin

A man who lost three family members in the AI-171 crash in June last year has claimed that he saw the body of the flight's captain inside the mortuary in Ahmedabad in a seated position with his hands still gripping the plane's controls.

The claims of Romin Vohra, a resident of Kheda district in Gujarat, have surfaced amid continuing discussions over the circumstances leading to the crash and the actions taken in the cockpit during the final moments of the flight.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB), in a preliminary report issued in July last year, said the plane's engine fuel control switches were cut off seconds after lift-off, with one of the pilots in the cockpit voice recording heard asking the other why did he cut off, and the latter responding he did not do so.

The exchange triggered widespread debate over whether pilot error may have contributed to the crash.

Latching on to his claims, an official of a US-based law firm, claiming to be representing families of more than 100 victims, said the crash must be examined by "truly independent experts" before blaming a "single person" for the tragedy.

"The families deserve the truth, not a quick conclusion that protects powerful companies or institutions," the official said.

The London-bound Air India flight AI-171 crashed into a hostel complex in Ahmedabad's Meghaninagar area moments after taking off from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport on June 12, killing 241 persons on board and 19 on the ground. One passenger survived.

It was operated by pilot-in-command **Captain Sumeet Sabharwal** and co-pilot Captain Clive Kunder.

The bodies of victims, many charred beyond recognition, were shifted to the

mortuary at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital in the Asarwa area for identification and DNA matching.

Romin Vohra, who lost his brother, niece and aunt in the tragedy, claimed he entered the mortuary on 13 June to search for the remains of his family members and there saw the body of Captain Sabharwal.

Speaking to PTI over the phone on Tuesday, Vohra, a lab technician by profession, said he was allowed inside because he works in the medical field.

Vohra said Captain Sabharwal's body was kept separately from others on one side of a table.

"At that time, the body was stiff and in a sitting position, as if he was still on his seat," he claimed.

"His hands were holding the steering (control yoke or column). His legs were bent the way a seated person's legs remain bent, while his arms were stretched forward," Vohra added.

Asked if the controls were still in the pilot's hands, he replied, "Yes, the steering was in his hands."

Vohra further claimed that the captain was still wearing his uniform, which helped him identify the body.

"The captain's uniform was there. There was only one captain's body there, which was that of Sumeet Sabharwal sir. I recognised him from the uniform," he said.

According to Vohra, the body had comparatively fewer burn injuries on the front side.

"He was burnt more on the backside. The front side and face were not burnt that much," he said.

Vohra said he could later confirm the identity after seeing publicly available photographs of the pilot.

He also described the emotional trauma faced by relatives waiting outside the hospital after the crash.

"At that time, our own tragedy was so huge that we were not in a condition to speak to anyone. For 10 days, I stayed put outside the hospital on the footpath in terrible condition while waiting for the bodies," he said, adding that his family was handed over the bodies after a successful DNA match.

Meanwhile, US-based legal firm Chionuma Law, which claimed to represent families of 115 victims of the crash, called for an independent investigation and cautioned against drawing premature conclusions.

"The reported account that Captain Sumeet Sabharwal was found in a seated position, still gripping the yoke, raises serious questions that cannot be ignored," Ayush Rajpal, case manager at the firm, said in a statement.

"A pilot who is holding the controls until the final moment should not be judged by speculation, especially when he is no longer alive to defend himself," he said.

"Every technical, mechanical, electrical and human factor" connected to the crash must be examined by "truly independent experts" before blaming a "single person" for the tragedy, Rajpal said.

As per the report, the engine N1 and N2 began to decrease from their take-off values as the fuel supply to the engines was cut off.

The Supreme Court in November last year said no one blamed the plane's chief pilot for the crash, and asked Sabharwal's 91-year-old father not to carry any emotional burden. —PTI

The London-bound Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner crashed just 32 seconds after take-off from Ahmedabad's Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport, killing 260 people —PTI

**LETTERS** write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

# *Rohingya survivors await justice years after Arakan Army massacre*

Two years after the Arakan Army, an ethnic armed group, killed and wounded hundreds of Rohingya Muslims and burned down their village in Myanmar's Rakhine State, the survivors are unable to return home, with many effectively detained, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in a report released on Monday.

The Arakan Army has rejected responsibility for the massacre at Hoyyar Siri (Htan Shauk Khan in Burmese), Buthidaung township, which involved grave violations amounting to war crimes. The 56-page report, titled "'Skeletons and Skulls Scattered Everywhere': Arakan Army Massacre of Rohingya Muslims in Hoyyar Siri, Myanmar," documents the 2 May, 2024, attack, in which Arakan Army personnel deliberately fired on unarmed villagers who were seeking safety after the armed group advanced on two Myanmar military bases in the vicinity.

Details of the massacre only began emerging more than a year later, after some survivors fled to Bangladesh and Malaysia. "The Arakan Army's murder of hundreds of Rohingya civilians and the burning of their village in Rakhine State in 2024 took the armed conflict with Myanmar's junta to a new level of depravity," said Meenakshi Ganguly, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch.

Human Rights Watch interviewed several dozen witnesses and survivors, corroborated their accounts by satellite imagery, and analysed and verified photographs and videos. Hostilities between Myanmar junta forces and the Arakan Army in Rakhine State resumed in November 2023.

Both sides have been responsible for serious abuses, including targeted attacks on civilians, arson, and unlawful conscription. The findings contradict the Arakan Army's claims in a letter to Human Rights Watch that its "fighters" only targeted military personnel or members of Rohingya armed groups.

Arakan Army personnel first opened fire on a group of civilians leaving Hoyyar Siri, some of whom were waving white flags. "First, my son was hit by a bullet," said one man, adding, "Then my wife and baby daughter were shot, followed by my other daughter."

The personnel continued to fire on the villagers as they turned back and attempted to flee. One woman said the fighters gathered a group of villagers in a paddy field beside a mosque. "Within minutes, they opened fire at us randomly, without saying anything," she said, adding, "No one was spared. My husband was hit by a bullet. When the Arakan Army saw he was still alive, they came closer, firing at him several more times."

In February 2025, the Arakan Army ordered all surviving Hoyyar Siri residents to relocate to a makeshift camp nearby —UNHRC

Human Rights Watch compiled a list of over 170 villagers, including about 90 children, who were killed or are still missing after the Hoyyar Siri massacre. The actual death toll is likely much higher. Human Rights Watch analysed and verified photographs and videos showing human remains at three separate sites in the village.

At two of these sites, civilian clothing is visible among human remains. Satellite imagery corroborates witness accounts that Arakan Army personnel set fire to Hoyyar Siri and, after taking control, destroyed the entire village. They also robbed villagers of their cash and jewellery. One man detained by the Arakan Army said that he and other detainees were beaten and tortured, including with electric shocks. Several witnesses reported that the Arakan Army abducted Rohingya women and girls from the village.

In February 2025, the Arakan Army ordered all surviving Hoyyar Siri residents to relocate to a makeshift camp nearby. Villagers who later managed to flee to Bangladesh told Human Rights Watch that they were denied freedom of movement, subjected to forced labour, and faced severe shortages of food and medical care.

They said that in August, the armed group organised a controlled media visit to Hoyyar Siri in which survivors were forced to provide false testimony to exonerate the Arakan Army for killing the civilians.

According to Human Rights Watch, over the past decade, the Myanmar military has committed ethnic cleansing, genocidal acts, and other atrocities in Rakhine State that have forced over a million Rohingya to flee. The massacre in Hoyyar Siri underscores that returning to Rakhine State is still unsafe for Rohingya refugees, even in areas now controlled by the Arakan Army. The Myanmar military and Arakan Army should immediately end attacks on civilians, release all civilians unlawfully detained, and provide redress to victims and their families, Human Rights Watch said. The Arakan Army, in its letter to Human Rights Watch, said it would facilitate inquiries by international human rights groups deemed credible and independent.

Both parties should cooperate fully with independent investigations, including by granting access to the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, the United Nations special rapporteur on Myanmar, and human rights groups. "Myanmar's military seemed indifferent to the plight of the Rohingya civilians at Hoyyar Siri in 2024, and since then the junta has done nothing to address human rights concerns," Ganguly said. —ANI

— PTI

## Trump to attend G-7 summit in France this June

**WASHINGTON, 20 MAY**

US President Donald Trump will attend the G-7 meeting in France from 15 June to 17 June, US media outlet Axios reported. Quoting a White House official, it said that the meeting, hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron, won't produce signed deals but seek to build consensus for future agreements. Apart from Iran, Trump is expected to talk about business, linking US aid with trade that is "beneficial for both investor and recipient nations," Axios reported. Trump could also speak on the adoption of US-developed AI tools, reducing China's hold over critical mineral supply chains, fighting drug smuggling and illegal immigration, promoting US exports, reducing regulatory barriers and increasing energy production — particularly of fossil fuels. —*PTI*

## 28 killed in drone strike in Sudan, rights group says

**CAIRO, 19 MAY**

A drone strike on a market in central Sudan on Tuesday killed 28 people and wounded dozens more, a local rights group said. The group called The Emergency Lawyers claimed on X that the market in West Kordofan province, a source of food and essential supplies, was targeted by the army. A nationwide war broke out in April 2023 due to tensions between Sudan's army and its rival paramilitary Rapid Support Forces escalating. The RSF controls West Kordofan. An army official army told The Associated Press it doesn't target civilians, while another military source said that an army drone struck two RSF combat vehicles near the market, without causing civilian casualties. There was no immediate comment from the RSF. —*PTI*

## Quake hits Peru, Turkey; 27 injured

**LIMA, 20 MAY**

A 5.8 Richter magnitude earthquake struck the Pacific region of southern Peru late on Tuesday, injuring 27 people and damaging buildings, officials said. No deaths were reported. The US Geological Survey said the quake's epicentre was 20 km east-southeast of the town of Pampa de Tate at a depth of 56.5 km. Peru lies on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines encircling the Pacific Basin. Turkey's Battalgazi district of Malatya province was also struck by a Richter 5.6 earthquake on Wednesday at 9am at a depth of 7 km. There were no immediate reports of damage. Turkey sits atop major fault lines and earthquakes are frequent. — *PTI*

## Torrential rain, floods batter China; 12 killed

**BEIJING, 20 MAY**

Torrential rain and floods hit parts of China this week, killing at least 12 people and forcing tens of thousands of people to evacuate, state media reported. State broadcaster CCTV reported on Wednesday five deaths and 11 people missing in Shimen County of Hunan province in central China. A rescue operation is underway. By Tuesday evening, more than 19,000 had been relocated, Chinese official news agency Xinhua reported. Xinhua said the county recorded about 13 inches of rainfall in 24 hours. One of its towns once received a rainfall of 240 mm (about 9 inches) within just a few hours, breaking historical records, it said. In nearby Hubei province, some streets turned into rivers and rescuers had to deploy inflatable boats. Some houses were flooded or collapsed, Xinhua reported. —*PTI*

# XI CALLS FOR END TO WEST ASIA WAR

### Putin-Xi say that amid unprecendented hegemony looms a threat of 'law of the jungle'

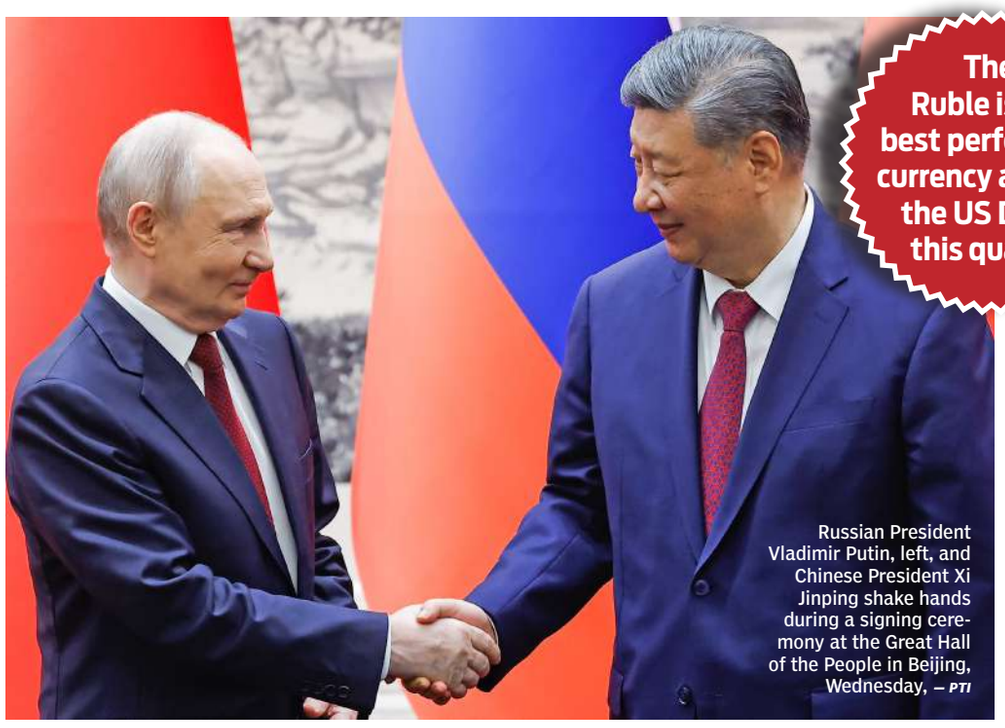
**BEIJING, 20 MAY**

Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday called for an immediate end to hostilities in West Asia, saying the situation had reached a "critical juncture", as he held talks with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin here.

The joint statement published on the Kremlin website said, "The damage caused by unilateral actions and hegemony is unprecedented, and the threat of regression to the law of the jungle looms large."

Welcoming Putin at the Great Hall of the People, Xi said renewed fighting in the Gulf and the wider West Asia must be avoided and stressed that negotiations should continue.

An early end to the conflict will help ease disruptions to energy supplies, industrial and supply chains, and the international trade order, he said. The talks came days after US President Donald Trump visited China from 14-15 May and held talks with the Chinese leader on the Iran-Israel war, the Strait of Hormuz and trade frictions.



Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, and Chinese President Xi Jinping shake hands during a signing ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Wednesday, — *PTI*

**The Ruble is the best performing currency against the US Dollar this quarter**

The meeting is being closely watched as both China and Russia are key strategic partners of Iran with close economic and military ties to Tehran and could influence its tough stand on the closure of Hormuz.

Xi described the international situation as "fluid and turbulent" and, in an apparent criticism of Trump's policies, said that "unilateralism and hegemonism are resurging".

When the meeting ended, there were no details of the gas pipeline project between Russia and China. A final commercial deal on the project has been in the pipeline. According to the Kremlin, around 40 deals are expected to be signed.

Putin, who is making his 25th visit to China, described Xi as his "dear friend" and highlighted their close cooperation. The two leaders also agreed to further extend the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighbourliness and Friendly Cooperation, signed 25 years ago.

Putin was accorded a ceremonial welcome by Xi and was received by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Putin earlier said bilateral trade had crossed USD 200 billion, with transactions in roubles and yuan. —*PTI*

## UKRAINE'S ALLY UK TO IMPORT RUSSIAN OIL

**LONDON, 20 MAY**

The UK government has watered down sanctions on Russian oil in an effort to shelter Britons from the cost-of-living squeeze triggered by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. A trade license that came into effect on Wednesday permits the import of Russian oil that has been refined into jet fuel and diesel in third countries, such as India and Turkey.

The US-Israeli war on Iran and Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz has sent fuel prices soaring around the world and sparked concerns about a shortage of jet fuel. Treasury Minister Dan Tomlinson said the changes are "for a time limited period and on a very specific issue."

Britain, a staunch Ukraine ally, has insisted that its sanctions against Russia remain among the toughest in the world. But lawmaker Emily Thornberry, who chairs the Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, said Ukraine's allies should keep squeezing Russia's oil industry, because it "is absolutely crippling their economy." —*PTI*

## Taiwan's future won't be decided by external forces: Prez

**TAIPEI, 20 MAY**

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te said that democracy was not a gift from the sky, and that Taipei's future "cannot be decided by external forces, nor can it be held hostage by fear, division, or short-term interests".

Speaking on the second anniversary of his inauguration on Wednesday, Lai said he hoped to persuade his American counterpart Donald Trump to go ahead with the US USD 14 billion arms package sale to Taiwan, something that the Republican indicated that the was reconsidering after his recent visit to China where he met President Xi Jinping. Xi told Trump that the two nations could "have clashes and even conflicts" over the "Taiwan question" without proper handling.

However, Lai stood defiant.

"No country has the right to annex Taiwan," Lai said he would tell Trump at the news briefing. "Democracy and freedom should also not be seen as provocation."

He said that the arms package, which Trump described as a "negotiating chip", was essential for peace. China views Taiwan as a breakaway province to be retaken by force if necessary. —*PTI*

# Iran could trigger 'nuclear arms race' in Gulf: Vance

**WASHINGTON, 20 MAY**

US Vice President JD Vance said Iran having an atomic weapon would trigger a "nuclear arms race" worldwide and asserted that the US was "locked and loaded" to restart military operations if Tehran failed to reach a peace deal.

Vance's remarks at a press conference at the White House on Tuesday came a day after President Donald Trump put off the decision to resume strikes on Iran at the request of Arab nations, including Qatar and the UAE, who said that Tehran was being "reasonable" in peace talks.

"We think the Iranians want to make a deal. The President has asked us to negotiate in good faith. And that's exactly what we've done," Vance said. On possibly resuming strikes, Vance said: "We don't want to go down that pathway. But the president is willing and able to

if we have to".

The US has a "simple proposition" and there are "two paths to go down", he said. "Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon"

But if Tehran acquired one, it would send other nations "scrambling" to get their own, setting off a "nuclear arms race".

"Iran would really be the first domino in what would set off a nuclear arms race all over the world... and in the Gulf," he said.

"As the father of three young kids, I don't want them to inherit a world where 20 additional regimes—half of them very dangerous and very sympathetic to terrorists—have nuclear weapons," Vance said.

Iran, however, hit back, with state media noting that the US was the only country to have ever used nuclear weapons but was now acting as the "judge and prosecutor".

Meanwhile, the US seized an oil tanker linked to Iran in the Indian Ocean.

The vessel 'Skywave' had earlier been sanctioned by Washington in March, and was believed to have loaded more than one million barrels of crude from Iran's Kharg Island in February.

Tracking data showed the ship moving west of Malaysia after crossing the Strait of Malacca earlier this week. —*Agencies*

## US-Israel wanted to install former Iran prez, but failed

**WASHINGTON, 20 MAY**

The US and Israel were considering making former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad govern the country as part of the plans for regime change in the early days of the war, according to a report.

Ahmadinejad, known for his anti-Israel, anti-America views, was consulted by the US and Israel as they drew up war plans targeting Iran, The New York Times reported.

An Israeli strike at his residence in Tehran was to free him from house arrest, the report claimed.

Ahmadinejad was injured on the first day of the war and soon became disillusioned with the plan for regime change.

Known for his frequent calls to "wipe Israel off the map" during his presidency from 2005-13, Ahmadinejad had become critical of the Iranian rulers, accusing them of corruption was under house arrest.

Ahmadinejad would have been able to "play a very important role" in Iran, his aide said, hinting the US saw him like Venezuela's Delcy Rodriguez. —*PTI*

## Pentagon to reduce brigades in Europe from 4 to 3

The Pentagon announced on Tuesday that it is reducing the number of Brigade Combat Teams (BCTs) stationed in Europe from four to three as the Trump administration presses NATO allies to increase defense spending. While the Department of Defence did not specify the number of troops affected, a BCT typically consists of about 4,400 to 4,700 soldiers. Officials said the move would return troop levels in Europe to those seen in 2021.

## Trump family gets immunity from tax audits

The US is "forever barred and precluded" from examining or prosecuting Trump, his sons and the Trump organisation's current tax issues, according to a one page memo by the US Justice Department. This comes as the US government agreed to drop tax claims connected to the President as part of a deal to resolve the Republic's $10 billion lawsuit against the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) over the leak of his tax returns.

## 42 US AIRCRAFTS, INCLUDING F-15S, LOST OR DAMAGED IN IRAN WAR

**WASHINGTON, 20 MAY**

At least 42 US aircraft, including fighter jets and drones, were lost or damaged during Operation Epic Fury launched on 28 February, according to an official report.

The number of aircraft damaged or destroyed may remain subject to revision due to multiple factors, including classification, ongoing combat, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) report said.

The losses include four F-15E Strike Eagle fighter jets, one F-35A Lightning II fighter aircraft, one A-10 Thunderbolt II ground-attack aircraft, seven KC-135 Stratotanker aerial refuelling aircraft, one E-3 Sentry AWACS aircraft, two MC-130J Commando II special operations aircraft, one HH-60W Jolly Green II helicopter, 24 MQ-9 Reaper drones and one MQ-4C Triton drone.

The Pentagon said the Iran has cost $29 billion. —*PTI*

## Israel kills 19 in Lebanon, including children

**BEIRUT, 20 MAY**

Israeli airstrikes on southern Lebanon on Tuesday killed at least 19 people, including four women and three children, Lebanon's Health Ministry said, the latest in near-daily attacks from both sides that have not stopped despite the US-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon.

In Beirut, the government said a single strike on the village of Deir Qanoun al Nahr in the coastal Tyre province killed 10 people, including three children and three women. Three were wounded.

State-run National News Agency said it destroyed a house, leaving several under the rubble. Their bodies were pulled out later in the day.

Airstrike on the southern city of Nabatieh and nearby Kfar Sir killed nine people.

More than a million people have been displaced in Lebanon by the fighting.—*PTI*

Women grieve as they hold the body of 6-month-old Mariam Fahos, killed in an Israeli airstrike in Saksakieh village, in the southern port city of Sidon, Lebanon

## 1 Red flips, Senate OKs bill against Don's war

**WASHINGTON, 20 MAY**

The Senate advanced the War Powers Resolution on Tuesday that could prevent President Donald Trump from using military force against Iran without congressional authorisation.

The bill passed with a 50-47 tally as four Republicans voted against the party line.

Democrats had forced seven failed votes on war powers. Three Republicans had consistently voted with the Democrats: Kentucky Senator Rand Paul, Susan Collins of Maine and Lisa Murkowski of Alaska.

However, on Tuesday, Louisiana Senator Bill Cassidy — fresh off a primary election loss in which Trump endorsed his opponent — switched sides. It will get a vote on final passage. —*PTI*

## Imran ouster leak: US backs Pak's sovereignty

**WASHINGTON DC, 20 MAY**

A US Department of State spokesperson said that Pakistani politics are "a matter for the Pakistani people to decide," following the publication of a classified diplomatic cable by an investigative outlet containing controversial comments about Pakistan's then-prime minister Imran Khan from a senior US diplomat.

Cable I-0678, dated 7 March, 2022, documents a meeting between Pakistan's then ambassador in Washington, Asad Majeed Khan, and Donald Lu, then the US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs. Lu reportedly said Khan's Moscow visit on 24 February 2022 - the day Russia attacked Ukraine - had caused serious concern in Washington.

Imran Khan —*SCREENGRAB*

This could allegedly be resolved if Khan were removed from office through a parliamentary no-confidence vote. The phrase "all will be forgiven" was cited by Khan, who added that Lu could not have made such a strong statement "without the express approval of the White House."

Khan was ultimately removed as Prime Minister by a no confidence vote in Parliament on 9 April, 2022. Lu had denounced the allegations against him as a "conspiracy theory." —*ANI*

**A TRAVEL MEMOIR**

## *Mandarin novel scripts Booker Prize history*

**LONDON, 20 MAY**

Taiwanese author Yáng Shuang-zi and translator Lin King won the International Booker Prize on Tuesday for "Taiwan Travelogue," a historical romance set in Japan-occupied Taiwan in the 1930s.

It is the first novel written in Mandarin Chinese to win the prestigious prize for fiction translated into English.

British novelist Natasha Brown, who chaired the judging panel, called it a "captivating, wryly sophisticated" book that plays with language and power.

The novel is a travel memoir by a Japanese novelist on a culinary tour of Taiwan and charts the — fictional — writer's complex relationship with her local interpreter.

Brown said the book explores class and colonialism, asking:

Yáng Shuang-zi (L) and Lin King have won this year's International Booker Prize. —*INSTAGRAM/@ANDOTHERPICS*

"Can love overcome a power imbalance?" She said it "It succeeds both as a romance and as a postcolonial novel."

Yáng said she "wanted to untangle the complex circumstances" when Taiwan was a Japanese colony.

"Research for the novel's central themes of travel and food changed my life in two obvious ways: my savings went down; my weight went up," she told the Booker Prizes website.

Published in its original language in 2020, "Taiwan Travelogue" is the first of Yáng's books to be translated into English. In the US, it won the National Book Award's translation category in 2024.

The judges praised the way Taiwanese-American translator King's translation added another layer to a book that plays with ideas of communication across languages.

The 50,000 pounds (USD 67,000) prize money will be split between the author and the translator. — *PTI*

## Tata expands charging network on expressway

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

Tata Power on Wednesday said its arm, Tata Power EV Charging Solutions Ltd (TPEVCSL), has expanded its electric vehicle (EV) charging network on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, in collaboration with Indian Oil Corporation. This includes a 240 kW ultra-fast EV charging station with four charging guns at the 63rd milestone for vehicles travelling from Delhi, and on the opposite carriageway at the 69th milestone, on the Haryana stretch of the expressway, a statement said. Tata Power has expanded its EV Charging network under the brand name of EZ Charge to more than 2 lakh home chargers; 6,700 public, semi-public, and fleet charging points; and 1,200 E-bus charging points across more than 690 cities and towns. —*PTI*

## Kumaraswamy to accelerate e-bus, e-truck adoption

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

In a significant push towards accelerating India's clean mobility transition, Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel HD Kumaraswamy on Wednesday chaired a high-level stakeholder consultation to encourage wider adoption of electric buses and trucks across the country. "The consultation was convened with the objective of understanding operational realities and strengthening collaboration between the government and private stakeholders," a statement said. Kumaraswamy said electric buses would become the backbone of passenger transportation in India, with e-trucks playing a transformative role in sustainable logistics and freight movement. Stressing the need for collaborative policymaking, the minister said the government was committed to working with operators and industry stakeholders to ensure India's transition to electric mobility is practical, inclusive and commercially sustainable. During the meeting, stakeholders shared feedback, operational experiences, sectoral concerns, and practical suggestions relating to financing, charging, fleet deployment, operational viability, and long-term support. —*PTI*

## Wrong Parle stocks rise after viral 'Melody' moment

**MUMBAI, 20 MAY**

Wrong stock buying struck Dalal Street yet again on Wednesday, with shares of Parle Industries surged 5 per cent to hit the upper circuit after social media users mistakenly linked the company to Melody toffees made by Parle Products.The rally followed a viral video in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi gifted a packet of Melody chocolates to Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni during a diplomatic meeting. Retail investors appeared to confuse Parle Industries with Parle Products, the privately held FMCG giant behind brands such as Parle-G, Monaco, KrackJack, Mango Bite and Poppins. Melody is manufactured exclusively by Parle Products, which is not listed on the stock market. Parle Industries, meanwhile, is a micro-cap company focused on infrastructure and real estate after transitioning from software exports. Despite Wednesday's spike to Rs 5.25, the stock remains down 41 per cent in three months, 46 per cent in six months and over 68 per cent in the past year. —*Salar News*

# Meta gives WFH, then fires 8,000 via 4am mail

### Lay-offs are increasing across the sector amid AI shift

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

Meta's Mark Zuckerberg has made AI the company's central priority, with engineering and product teams expected to take the biggest hit as the company restructures — and more cuts possible later this year –*FREEPIK*

Meta employees across the US and Britain were told to work from home shortly before the company began laying off about 8,000 workers — nearly 10 per cent of its workforce — with instruction emails hitting inboxes at around 4am. The first messages were reported from its Singapore hub, according to Bloomberg.

In an internal memo, Chief People Officer Janelle Gale said 7,000 employees would be reassigned to new AI-native teams, while about 6,000 open roles have been closed and managerial layers reduced. Meta had about 78,000 employees before the restructuring; thousands are now out, with thousands more being reassigned.

Engineering and product teams are expected to take the biggest hit, with more cuts possible later this year. Zuckerberg has made AI the company's central priority; Meta has said it plans to spend between USD 125 billion and USD 145 billion this year, largely on AI, with the goal of building smaller, leaner teams focused on the technology.

Meta had confirmed the layoffs last month after details leaked. Inside the company, morale dipped sharply. Some employees reportedly began collecting free snacks and spare laptop chargers ahead of the formal announcement. At the same time, reports emerged that a new internal tool was tracking mouse movements and keystrokes to help train AI systems. The move sparked internal pushback. Over 1,000 employees signed a petition opposing the tracking.

The pattern is repeating across the sector. Cisco Systems cut 4,000 jobs last week. Microsoft, Amazon, Disney and ASML have all announced layoffs or voluntary exits. In April, Oracle laid off an estimated 20,000-30,000 employees through early-morning emails across geographies. Dipal Dutta, CEO at RedoQ, told NDTV that this move is not a temporary phase.

The volatility sweeping tech is not a temporary correction but a permanent shift: enterprise productivity is no longer tied to headcount. Generative AI and autonomous workflows have commoditised routine engineering, customer operations, and data management, collapsing the old tech model of scaling people to drive growth. —*Agencies*

**9TH CONSECUTIVE DECLINE**

# Rupee slips 13P to hit lifetime low of 96.83

**MUMBAI, 20 MAY**

The rupee fell 13 paise to close at a fresh lifetime low of 96.83 on Wednesday — its ninth consecutive decline — as elevated crude prices, strong USD and surging US treasury yields amid the West Asia crisis stoked inflation worries.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 96.89 against the US dollar, then lost further ground to touch a record low of 96.95 and a high of 96.65, before settling at 96.83, registering a fall of 13 paise over its previous close. In the previous session, the rupee tumbled 50 paise to settle at 96.70 against the dollar.

"This fall led to inflation worries and sell-off in global markets, making the markets risk-averse," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Commodities Research at Mirae Asset Sharekhan.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias on risk aversion in the global markets amid inflation worries. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 96.5 to Rs 97.10," he added.

The rupee's sharp decline has emerged as a major economic warning sign for policymakers, investors and businesses. Once among Asia's more stable currencies, it has become one of the worst-performing emerging market currencies this year, pressured by expensive oil, capital outflows, widening trade deficits and a surging dollar.

Meanwhile, the dollar index was trading at 99.42, higher by 0.09 per cent. Brent crude was trading down 2.77 per cent at USD 109.95 per barrel in futures trade. —*PTI*

## UN cuts India's 2026 GDP forecast to 6.4 pc

**UNITED NATIONS, 20 MAY**

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) on Tuesday revised India's 2026 growth forecast to 6.4 per cent from 6.6 per cent, citing economic shocks from the West Asia crisis.

India is one of the fastest-growing economies, per the report, with output expected to expand up to 6.6 per cent in 2027.

Ingo Pitterle, Senior Economist at UN DESA, pointed out that the West Asian crisis is lowering growth while pushing up inflation.

"We have seen structurally very robust growth in India, driven by consumer demand, by public investment, but also by strong performance in services exports," Pitterle said.

Explaining that increasing import costs can also affect exports, Shantanu Mukherjee, Director of Economic Analysis and Policy Division, UN DESA, said, "This is a longer term structural issue that you may begin to see play out when things like freight costs, logistics costs, industrial petrochemicals... start increasing the cost for businesses."

"Like many other large economies, India has some space to manage these," Mukherjee added. —*PTI*

**MARKETS REBOUND**

## Sensex up by 117 points, Nifty by 41 points

**MUMBAI, 20 MAY**

Sensex recovered from early losses to settle 117 points higher on Wednesday, even as investors remained cautious amid higher crude prices and a weaker rupee.

BSE Sensex climbed 117.54 points, or 0.16 per cent, to settle at 75,318.39. The index opened lower and fell as much as 671.44 points, or 0.89 per cent, to a day's low of 74,529.41, before buying in oil and gas, financial and auto shares in the final hour helped it rebound about 877 points from that low.

Of the 30-Sensex firms, Reliance Industries led the rally at 2.83 per cent. Bajaj Finserv, Trent, InterGlobe Aviation, Axis Bank and Mahindra & Mahindra were also among the winners. While Bharat Electronics, Tech Mahindra, Eternal and Tata Steel were among the laggards.

NSE Nifty edged higher by 41 points, or 0.17 per cent, to end at 23,659. The barometer moved between a low of 23,397.30 and a high of 23,690.90 during the day.

Brent crude traded 2 per cent lower at USD 109 per barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,457.49 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

FMCG declined 0.63 per cent, Focused IT (0.27 per cent), IT (0.24 per cent), and Consumer Durables (0.15 per cent). A total of 2,120 stocks advanced, while 1,981 declined and 209 remained unchanged on the BSE.

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said he was deciding to restart attacks on Iran, but put it off after receiving a call from interlocutors on Tehran being "reasonable" in the peace talks. —*PTI*

## Gold advances to ₹1.64 lakh/10g on positive global cues

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

Gold prices climbed Rs 1,300 to Rs 1.64 lakh per 10 grams on Wednesday, tracking gains in overseas trade amid lingering US-Iran tensions. Traders said renewed buying supported domestic gold prices despite elevated US bond yields and a stronger dollar.

According to local marketmen, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity appreciated by Rs 1,300 to Rs 1,64,900 per 10 grams from Tuesday's closing level of Rs 1,63,600 per 10 grams. However, silver prices dropped for the second straight session, declining by Rs 5,000 to Rs 2,66,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). The white metal had settled at Rs 2,71,000 per kg in the previous session, marketmen said.

In the international markets, spot gold was trading marginally higher at USD 4,483.54 per ounce while silver rose over 2 per cent to USD 75.42 per ounce. Analysts said silver prices remained volatile due to weak demand and continued profit-taking after the recent sharp swings in rates.

Market participants remained focused on the ongoing US-Iran conflict and delays in reopening the Strait of Hormuz, which continue to fuel inflation concerns and tighter monetary policy globally, it added. —*PTI*

## Andhra clears Adani's pumped storage project

**AMARAVATI, 20 MAY**

The Andhra Pradesh government has approved the allocation of 2,250 MW pumped-storage project in the YSR Kadapa district to Adani Hydro Energy Eleven Limited, said a GO issued by the Energy Department on Tuesday.

The state government has is promoting large-scale renewable energy, pumped-storage, and green industrial projects under the Integrated Clean Energy Policy 2024 to position Andhra Pradesh as a major clean-energy destination.

The incentive aims to attract investments worth nearly Rs 10 lakh crore and generate around 7.5 lakh jobs.

The proposal was cleared by the State Investment Promotion Board (SIPB) chaired by Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu, as per recommendations of the State Investment Promotion Committee.

The project will come up at the Lord Balaji Donthi Kona PSP Park in Kadapa district and is expected to be among the country's largest pumped storage facilities. —*PTI*

## No relief in phone memory prices: Electronics Assn

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

Consumers will likely tface high memory prices, as no significant capacity addition is in the pipeline in the next 12 to 18 month India Electronics and Semiconductor Association (IESA) said on Wednesday.

IESA President Ashok Chandak said a memory plant needs time to be established.

"There will be a price rise due to high demand," he said.

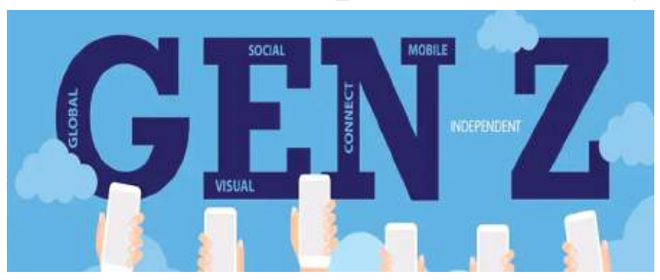
The price of smartphones has gone up by 20-30 per cent in the last six months.

The entire memory capacity of memory chip maker Micron in India has been booked.

"Critical raw materials like petrochemical plants, diesel, manganese and chemicals have been affected by the West Asia crisis," Chandak also stated. —*PTI*

## India's Gen Z, millennials lead in AI confidence at workplace: Survey

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**




Indian Gen Z and millennial professionals are adapting AI in the workplace faster than their global peers, according to Deloitte's latest Global Gen Z and Millennial Survey.

The report, with 806 participants in India, including 506 Gen Zs and 300 millennials, added that more than 90 per cent of respondents regularly use AI for learning and development, career guidance and managing work-related stress.

Deloitte said AI adoption in India's workforce is moving beyond productivity-related tasks "into a broader support system." The survey further showed that 32 per cent of Gen Zs and 35 per cent of millennials in India have already completed AI training programmes, while 54 per cent of Gen Zs and 60 per cent of millennials expressed interest in further upskilling.

"The need of the hour is to have a role-specific, immersive, comprehensive AI upskilling program," said Deepti Sagar, Chief People and Experience Officer at Deloitte India. —*ANI*

**DESPITE 11 PENDING CASES**

## *Environment Ministry clears coal mining expansion*

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

–*FREEPIK*

The Environment Ministry's expert appraisal committee (EAC) has cleared the expansion of the Magadh opencast coal mine in Jharkhand's Chatra and Latehar districts, despite 11 pending court cases over alleged forest land encroachment.

Central Coalfields Limited, a Coal India subsidiary, sought environment clearance to raise the mine's production capacity from 20 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) to 24 MTPA, with the mining lease area reduced from 1,769 ha to 1,598.71 ha. The project involves 628.09 ha of forest land, of which Stage-II clearance has been granted for 276.04 ha; the remaining 352.05 ha is yet to receive final approval for diversion.

The EAC recommended that the project proponent (PP) place closely spaced bamboo pillars/fencing to prevent any mining or allied activities within the forest land. It also recommended that no mining activities should be carried out in the 352.05 ha area, without obtaining Stage–II forest clearance for the land.

According to the minutes of the EAC's meeting on 28-29 April, the committee observed that court cases over alleged forest land encroachment are associated with the project, but noted that the land involved falls outside the approved mine lease area.

While eight cases are pending before the Latehar district court, the remaining are before the Chatra district court.

All 11 cases were filed between 2019 and 2025 under the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and the Indian Forest (Bihar Amendment) Act, 1989. The committee said all mining and allied activities on the disputed forest land have since been stopped. —*PTI*

## Samsung's union leader threatens 18-day strike

**SEOUL, 20 MAY**

Management at Samsung Electronics failed to reach a last-minute wage deal with union leaders in South Korea on Wednesday, raising the prospect of a strike that could rattle global semiconductor supplies and the country's trade-dependent economy.

Union leader Choi Seung-ho said 74,000 unionised workers will begin an 18-day strike on Thursday, demanding Samsung allocate 15 per cent of annual operating profits to employee bonuses and remove the 50 per cent salary cap on bonuses.

The strike could cause up to 100 trillion won (USD 66 billion) in economic damage by disrupting Samsung's semiconductor manufacturing processes, prompting government officials to threaten to invoke an emergency power to force a settlement.

Both sides blamed each other for the breakdown. The union accused management of rejecting a government-mediated proposal, while management accused the union of demanding excessive compensation for workers at loss-making units. The two sides said they would continue efforts to reach a deal, though it is unclear if talks would resume later in the day. —*PTI*

## Mukund enters QFs of SM Krishna Memorial Open

**BENGALURU, 20 MAY**

Seasoned Mukund Sasikumar entered the quarterfinals, overcoming Japanese qualifier Taiyo Yamanaka in a tight contest at the SM Krishna Memorial Open tennis tournament here on Wednesday.

The experienced Mukund held his nerve in key moments to beat Yamanaka 6-4, 7-6 (1) in the pre-quarterfinals.

Teenage wild card Kriish Tyagi produced a spirited fight against third seed Hamish Stewart of Great Britain, stretching him to three sets. But the Indian went down 6-4, 4-6, 3-6.

Earlier, Mukund struck decisively in the 10th game of the opening set, breaking Yamanaka to pocket the set 6-4. The second set evolved into a tighter contest, with the Japanese player using his strong serve effectively and firing nine aces compared to Mukund's six.—*PTI*

## U-18 hockey series: India men hold Australia 3-3

**BHOPAL, 20 MAY**

Gritty India U-18 men's hockey team held its Australian counterparts to a commendable 3-3 draw in the fourth and final match of the series here on Wednesday. India and Australia thus shared the spoils in the four-match series 1-1. At the SAI Centre here, India started strongly and scored two early goals, courtesy of Karan Gautam (10'), who converted a penalty corner in the 10th minute, followed by a field goal from Ben Siddharth (14'). However, Australia fought back and equalised in the second quarter. Jet Johnstone (18', 25') scored a crucial brace to bring Australia level by half-time. After a closely fought third quarter, India regained the lead thanks to a field goal by captain Ketan Kushwaha (40').—*PTI*

## India U-19 to play 3 Youth ODIs and 2 'Tests' vs Sri Lanka

**COLOMBO, 20 MAY**

The India U-19 team will tour Sri Lanka for three youth one-dayers and two four-day 'Test' matches between July, the SLC announced on Wednesday. The India U-19 team will arrive in Colombo on 30 June and then travel to Hambantota, where it will play three 50-over games on 4, 6 and 9 July. The first of the two red ball games will be held in Galle from July, while the second match will be held in Colombo from 20 to 23 July.—*PTI*

-PTI

## Dhairya shocks Tse Chun in Asian Junior squash

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

India's Dhairya Gogia on Wednesday shocked Hong Kong's 5/8 seed Tse Ka Chun in the first round of the boys' U-13 section at the 33rd Asian Junior Individual Squash Championships in Panzhihua, China, on Wednesday. Gogia recorded a 12-10, 10-12, 11-7, 11-7 win over Chun in the boys' singles. Gogia's effort underlined India's dominant performances across age groups on the opening day of the four-day competition. Results (Indians, 1st round): U-13: Boys: 3/4-Amarya Bajaj bt Chau Hyo Chon (Mac) 11-1, 11-1, 11-5; 3/4-Abhyuday Arora bt Danuja Jayasinghe (SL) 11-5, 11-4, 11-1.—*PTI*

# GT eye top-two finish with win against flagging CSK

### CSK have been pushed to the brink of elimination and require victory

**AHMEDABAD, 20 MAY**

Gujarat Titans will take on Chennai Super Kings in match 66 of IPL 2026 at Ahmedabad -*PTI*

Eyeing a top-two finish to ensure a shot at Qualifier 1, Gujarat Titans will have their tails up when they face a flagging Chennai Super Kings side seeking to regain lost ground after a rather disappointing campaign, in their IPL match here on Thursday.

A top-two placement at the end of the league stage grants the teams two opportunities to reach the final.

Currently placed second with 16 points, the Titans are in a three-way battle alongside table-toppers Royal Challengers Bengaluru (18 points) and Sunrisers Hyderabad (16 points), and victory against CSK will vastly improve their chances of a top-two finish in the group phase. A victory over CSK by a heavy margin could even push GT past RCB's (+1.065) net run rate, depending on other fixtures. And if SRH also win their final league stage game against RCB, the battle for the second spot will come down to net run rate. In this scenario, GT holds a slight edge with their NNR (+0.400) being better than the Sunrisers' +0.350. On the other hand, with their playoff hopes inching closer to getting extinguished after a narrow loss to SRH, the five-time formidable champions Chennai Super Kings will seek to salvage pride in what could be their final outing in this edition.

**GT VS CSK @ Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad.**
**7.30 pm IST**

Ruturaj Gaikwad's men have been pushed to the brink of elimination and require a victory, along with other results, to go their way to stay in contention for the last playoff berth. Going into the contest on the traditionally batting-friendly strip at the Narendra Modi Stadium, Titans' captain Shubman Gill is in excellent form, and so is his opening partner Sai Sudharsan. For the opening pair, negotiating early swing and controlling the powerplay will be crucial against the CSK bowling attack.

**After Surya, Shreyas is the main contender for India's T20 captaincy: Ponting**

Punjab Kings head coach Ricky Ponting has backed his franchise captain, Shreyas Iyer, to lead India in the T20 format after the team moves on from Suryakumar Yadav, saying that he is at the top of his game and has never been "more mature". Suryakumar recently captained India to an unprecedented second World Cup title, but his form has dipped drastically in the last 12 months, and he has been far from his best even in the ongoing Indian Premier League.

"There are several contenders (for the captaincy job post Surya), but he's (Shreyas Iyer) one of the main contenders as far as I'm concerned. —*PTI*

## I can see Sooryavanshi breaking Gayle's record: Anil Kumble

Former India captain Anil Kumble believes teen sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi can break Chris Gayle's record for most sixes in a single IPL season, with his range and temperament setting him apart from other batters.Sooryavanshi continued his remarkable run in IPL 2026 with another stunning display of power-hitting as Rajasthan Royals kept their playoff hopes alive with a seven-wicket victory over Lucknow Super Giants on Tuesday.The 15-year-old opener has already smashed 53 sixes this season, leaving him just six short of Gayle's long-standing record of 59 maximums in a single IPL edition.Kumble told Star Sports, "He has already hit 53 sixes this IPL season. Chris Gayle holds the record for most sixes in a season with 59. RR have one more league game and then the playoffs. If they win, he will get more chances. I can see Vaibhav Sooryavanshi breaking Gayle's record and making history.""(A) very few batters can hit sixes over cover with such ease. But Sooryavanshi did it multiple times against Digvesh Rathi. I am glad people still have words to describe such talent. I am running out of my own vocabulary. This kid is very special.""What stands out even more is his mindset. Every time he speaks, he sounds mature beyond his years. That is crucial at this age, especially with all the attention and praise coming his way," the legendary spinner said. Kumble said Sooryavanshi's grounded approach despite the growing hype around him indicates he is prepared for a long run.

**SUPER CHESS CLASSIC**

# Pragg faces Bogdan-Daniel after rest day

**BUCHAREST, 20 MAY**

Second-placed Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa will take on Romania's Deac Bogdan-Daniel in the sixth round of the Super Chess Classic, a part of the Grand Chess Tour, seeking to break his run of draws, here.

After five rounds, Germany's Vincent Keymer (3.5 points) is in sole lead by half a point over a chasing pack that includes the Dutch duo of Anish Giri and Jorden van Foreest, top-seeded American Fabiano Caruana and Praggnanandhaa.

Caruana joined the shared second spot by defeating Alireza Firouzja of France in his fourth round game, which was pushed back to the rest day as the latter suffered an ankle injury.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France and Wesley share the sixth spot on 2.5 points each, while World Championship challenger Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan are right behind on two points. Romanian Bogdan-Daniel is in ninth spot on 1.5 points, a half point ahead of Firouzja.

After a lone victory over Sindarov in the second round, besides four draws, the pressure is now on Praggnanandhaa as he has a few tough matches left in the second half of the tournament. The Indian will have black in the next round against Bogdan-Daniel, but thereafter, he has to take on Caruana and Vachier-Lagrave in succession before Anish Giri in the finale.

Keymer has been clearly the pick of the players thus far, and his world ranking has now gone to number four in live ratings. The German has white against Firouzja in the sixth round, and a victory could pretty much secure the title for him.

Caruana is one player who has increased his chances considerably in the tournament thanks to a victory over Firouzja, and the American faces Sindarov in his next game. It will come down to Caruana's deep preparation against Sindarov's sharp, concrete play, wherein error could decide the contest.

The 10-player nine-round event carries a total prize pool of USD 375000, with USD 100000 reserved for the winner. This is the second event of the GCT this year after the Warsaw rapid, and the top four finishers will also qualify for the Grand finale slated later this year.

Pairings round 6: Deac Bogdan-Daniel (Rou, 1.5) vs R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 3); Vincent Keymer (Ger, 3.5) vs Alireza Firouzja (Fra, 1); Caruana Fabiano (Usa, 3) vs Javokhir Sindarov (Uzb, 2); Jorden Van Foreest (Ned, 3) vs Anish Giri (Ned, 3). —*PTI*

## Malvika, Ashmita progress to 2nd round; Lakshya, Prannoy out

**KUALA LUMPUR, 20 MAY**

India's Malvika Bansod and Ashmita Chaliha emerged as the lone bright spots on an otherwise disappointing day for the country at the Malaysia Masters Super 500 here, advancing to the second round with contrasting wins in women's singles.

Malvika, who is on a comeback trail after recovering from an ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) injury that required surgery, fought back strongly to beat Germany's world No. 52 Yvonne Li 21-17 16-21 21-9, while Ashmita registered a comfortable 21-16 21-13 victory over Indonesia's world No. 56 Thalita Ramadhani Wiryawan.

Malvika will face Denmark's eighth seed Line Højmark Kjaersfeldt, while Ashmita takes on Malaysia's Goh Jin Wei next. However, India also suffered a string of early exits across categories.

In men's singles, eighth seed Lakshya Sen, the brightest Indian prospect, crashed out after a shock 17-21, 11-21 defeat to Indonesia's world No. 38 Moh. Zaki Ubaidillah.

HS Prannoy, the 2023 Asian Games and World Championships bronze winner, too bowed out after a marathon battle against Japan's sixth seed Kodai Naraoka, losing 17-21, 22-20, 22-24 in an 80-minute contest.

Kiran George retired while trailing 15-21, 1-6 against France's seventh seed Alex Lanier. India's Tharun Mannepalli squandered a one-game advantage to lose 21-17, 14-21, 8-21 to Chinese Taipei's Wang Po-Wei. In women's singles, Anmol Kharb fought hard before going down 21-13, 16-21, 19-21 to Denmark's eighth seed Line Christophersen Kjærsfeldt. —*PTI*

## RANJI TROPHY TO START ON 11 OCT

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

The Ranji Trophy will once again be played in two phases, with the opening round starting on 11 October, while the 2026-27 domestic season will commence with the Duleep Trophy starting August 23, the BCCI announced on Wednesday.

The BCCI will be organising 1788 games across age-group and senior cricket segments during the season, which include U-16, U-19, U-23, senior level for men and U-15, U-19, U-23 and senior level for women.

Keeping up with the demand of time, the U-23 white ball competition and the Inter-zonal University meet for the Vizzy Trophy will be played in T20 format going forward.

"The 2026-27 domestic season reflects the BCCI's continued commitment to building a strong and competitive domestic structure while ensuring a balanced progression across formats and categories," the board stated in a release.

The Duleep Trophy, which is back in zonal format, will be played between 23 August and 10 September. —*PTI*

**TEST SERIES SWEEP**

# Bangladesh beat Pak by 78 runs

**SYLHET, 20 MAY**

Taijul Islam finished with six wickets as Bangladesh dismissed Pakistan for 358 on Wednesday for a 78-run win in the second cricket Test and a 2-0 sweep of the series.

The left-arm spinner took two of the three wickets to fall on Day 5 and returned 6-120 from 34.2 overs, clinching the series after helping reduce the tourists to 316-7 on Day 4.

Pakistan added 42 runs on the fifth morning before losing three wickets without addition to the total in 13 deliveries as Bangladesh rushed to victory.

"Our bowlers did a great job in hot conditions, on a flat wicket," Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto said. "In the batting sometimes (in the past) we lost too many wickets, but nowadays we have brilliant partnerships. Our tailenders also contribute a lot. Those are the things we wanted to improve, and I hope we continue."

Bangladesh won the first Test by 104 runs.

Rizwan (94) struck Nahid Rana (2-71) for consecutive boundaries in the third over of the day to make Pakistan's intention clear. Sajid Khan also scored freely to maintain pressure on the bowlers from the home team.

**It's for the PCB to decide on my captaincy: Masood**

Disappointed Pakistan captain Shan Masood on Wednesday said the country's cricket board will take a call on his leadership role in the red ball format after Bangladesh handed them a 0-2 rout in the just-concluded Test series.

Bangladesh defeated Pakistan by 78 runs in the second Test at Sylhet on Wednesday, as the latter is languishing at eighth in the nine-team World Test Championship table.

Taijul Islam finished with six wickets -*BCA*

**India drops to 6th in the WTC table**

The Indian cricket team dropped to sixth in the latest World Test Championship (WTC) rankings after Bangladesh improved a rung to fifth with a crushing 2-0 series sweep against Pakistan at home.

Bangladesh had earlier won the first Test by a massive 104 runs in Mirpur, and with another big win on Wednesday, the team leapfrogged India as per the latest ICC update.

Bangladesh now have 58.33 percentage points with two wins, one loss and a draw in four Tests, while India has 48.15 points from nine Tests, four wins and as many defeats along with a drawn Test.

Bangladesh 278 (Litton 126, Shahzad 4-81) and 390 (Mushfiqur 137, Litton 69, Shahzad 4-86) beat Pakistan 232 (Babar 68, Rana 3-60, Taijul 3-67) and 358 (Rizwan 94, Masood 71, Agha 71, Taijul 6-120) by 78 runs. —*PTI*

**CONTRIBUTION TO INDIAN HOCKEY**

# *Baldev Singh to be honoured with Padma Shri*

**NEW DELHI, 20 MAY**

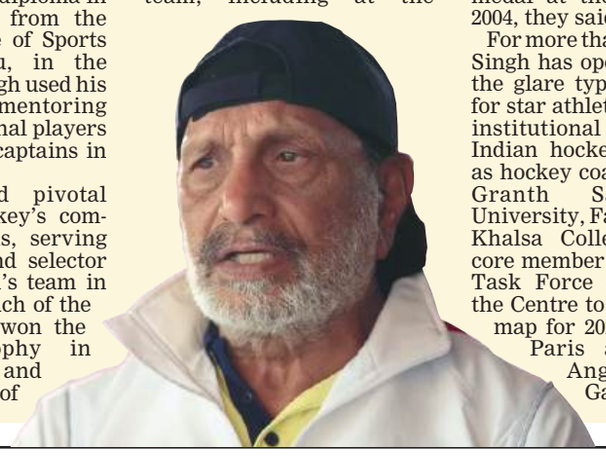
Baldev Singh, who turned the quaint town of Shahabad Markanda on NH44 into a conveyor belt for elite hockey talent, will be conferred the country's prestigious civilian honour -- Padma Shri -- by President Droupadi Murmu on May 25, officials said on Wednesday.

The 75-year-old Singh arrived in Shahabad Markanda in 1982 as a coach with the Haryana Sports Department and served there for four years. He returned to the town in 1993, turning the hockey nursery into one of "the most productive centres for hockey talent", they said.

Beginning his professional career with the Namdhari Hockey team, Bhaini Sahib, and armed with a diploma in hockey coaching from the National Institute of Sports (NIS), Bengaluru, in the early eighties, Singh used his experience in mentoring over 80 international players and eight Indian captains in the sport.

Singh occupied pivotal roles within hockey's competitive apparatus, serving as chief coach and selector of the junior men's team in 1993, assistant coach of the Indian side that won the Champions Trophy in Madras in 1996, and later chief coach of the senior national team.

From 2001 to 2004, he served as coach of the Indian men's team, including at the Champions Trophy held at Amstelveen, Netherlands, and guided the team to a gold medal at the Asia Cup in 2004, they said.



For more than four decades, Singh has operated far from the glare typically reserved for star athletes, shaping the institutional scaffolding of Indian hockey contributing as hockey coach at Sri Guru Granth Sahib World University, Fatehgarh Sahib, Khalsa College, Amritsar, core member of the Olympic Task Force constituted by the Centre to prepare a road map for 2020 Tokyo, 2024, Paris and 2028 Los Angles Olympic Games. —*PTI*

## ARSENAL WINS ITS FIRST PREMIER LEAGUE TITLE IN 22 YEARS

**LONDON, 20 MAY**

Mikel Arteta's team was crowned Premier League champion for the first time since 2004 on Tuesday night after Manchester City drew 1-1 with Bournemouth.

"I told you all.. " It's done," Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice posted on social media with a photo of himself and his teammates celebrating.

The result put an end to what might be Pep Guardiola's final title challenge with City after the decorated manager didn't dismiss reports he was set to leave the club at the end of the season.

City needed to win at Bournemouth to take it down to the final game of the campaign on Sunday. But the draw left Arsenal with an unassailable four-point lead at the top, ending its 22-year wait for the title.

Arsenal fans celebrated wildly outside its Emirates Stadium, setting off flares and partying in the street. There were celebrations at the club's training ground, too, where the players had gathered to watch the match. —*PTI*